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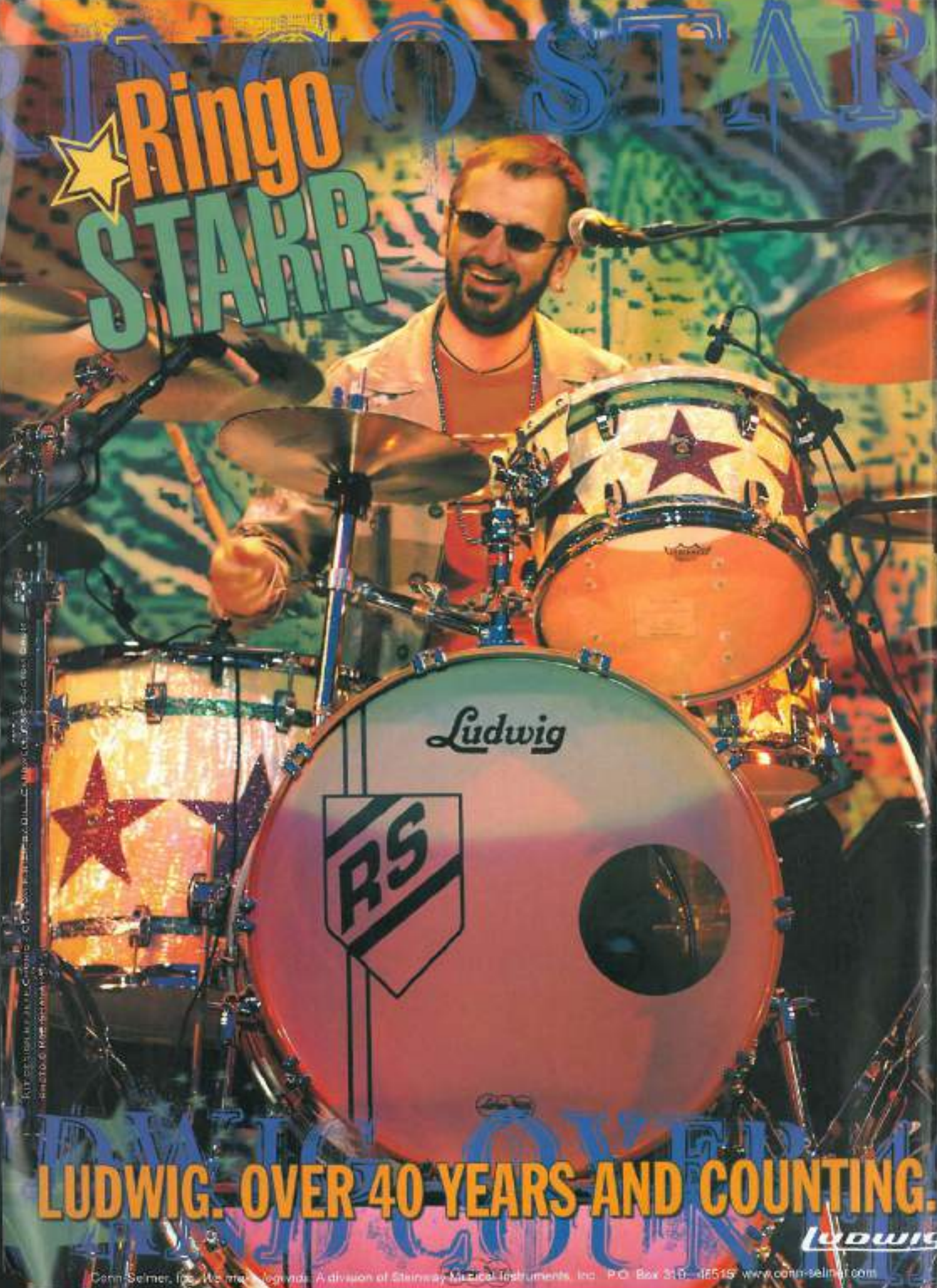
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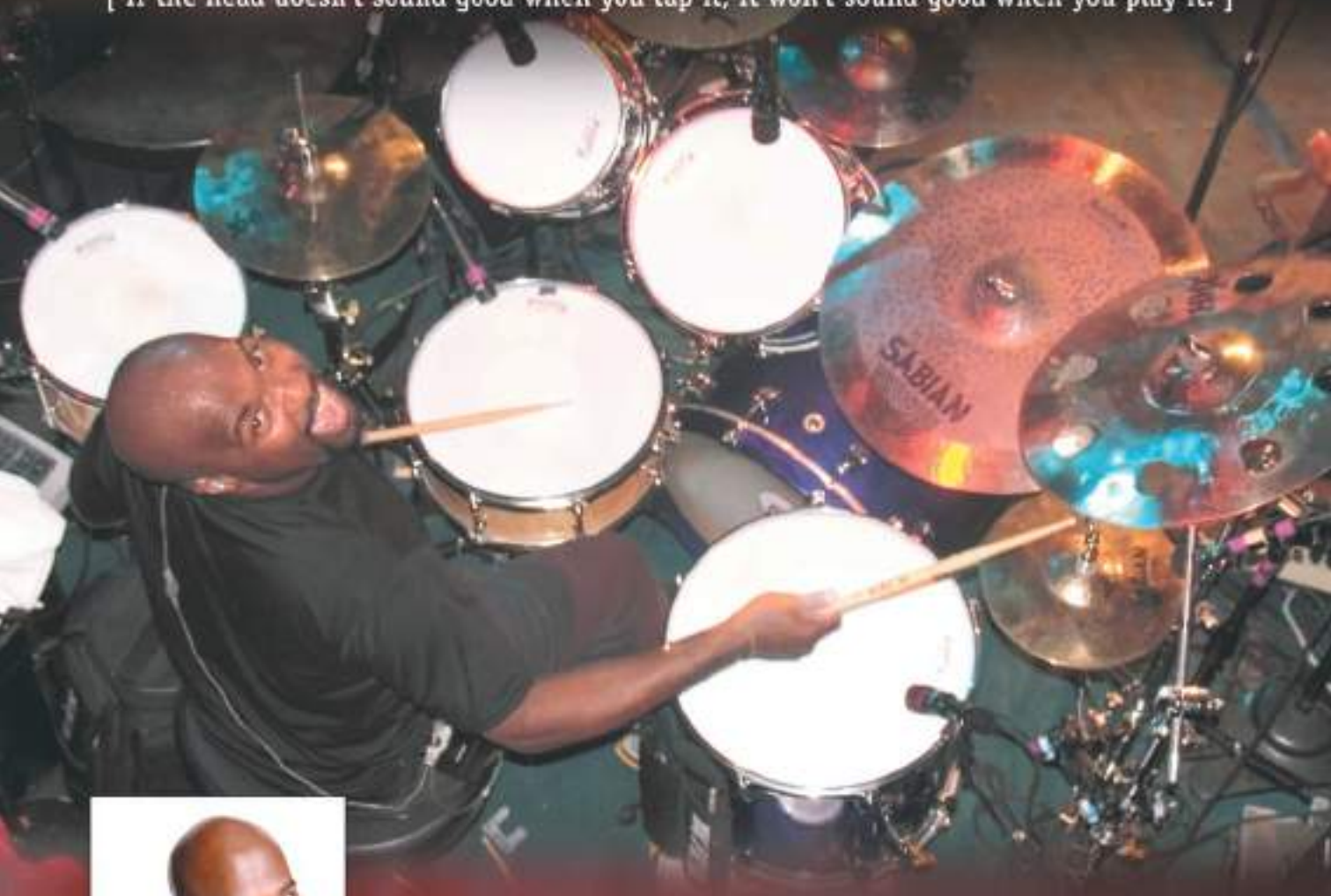

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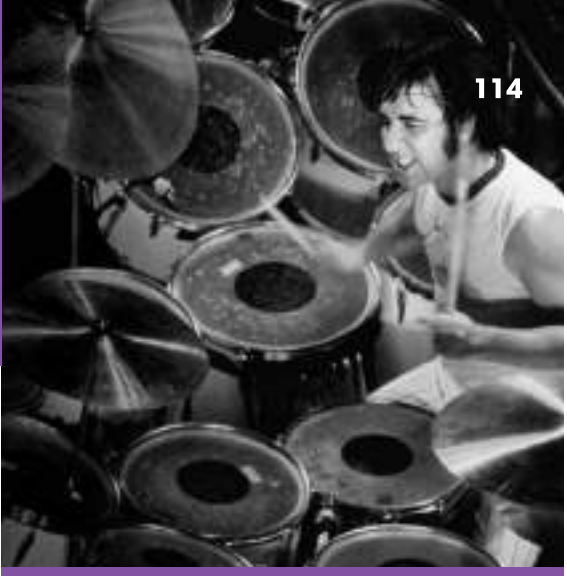

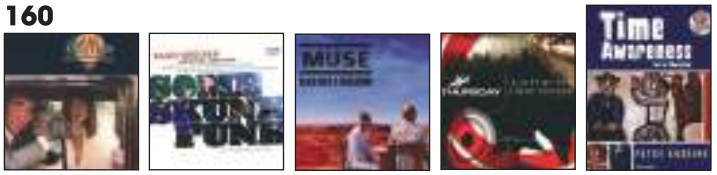

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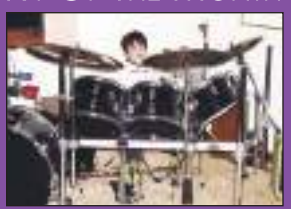

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Welcome To Modern Drummer Wire

I don't have to tell you, if you're serious about drumming, you want as much info on the subject as you can get. And let's face it, if you're reading *Modern Drummer*, you're *into* drumming. With that in mind, earlier this year the editors at *MD* started kicking around the idea of an e-newsletter, something we could regularly send out that would give loyal *MD* readers an additional dose of drumming info. With that, *Modern Drummer Wire* was born.

What will you find in *Modern Drummer Wire*? Well, it's not your typical boring, flat, junk-filled e-blast. *MD Wire* is filled with up-to-the-minute details about all things drum-related. For instance, you'll see late-breaking artist and industry news, hot equipment info, and must-have CD, DVD, and book releases. We also have a section called "Lick Of The Month," where we spotlight quick technique items that you can add to your playing arsenal. And, of course, we discuss the latest happenings in the world of *Modern Drummer*, especially a look at what you'll be seeing in future issues.

We're hoping that *MD Wire* creates a more direct link between you, our valued reader, and the editors of the magazine. To aid us in doing that, we've included a reader comments section, asking for your opinions on specific drumming topics. Your input will help shape the future of *Modern Drummer.*

I'm happy to report that the response to *MD Wire* so far has been huge. Dave Tarr of Baltimore, Maryland wrote, "I love *MD Wire*. As a long-time *MD* subscriber, I didn't think it was possible for *MD* to be even more responsive to their audience—and yet you've done it. The immediacy of the *Wire* is its best feature." David "Sanman" SanSeverino wrote, "*MD Wire* is an outstanding idea, very thorough, and well done. I can't wait for the next one!" And Luca Aveta said, "I live in Italy and subscribe to *MD*. Congratulations on *MD Wire*. It's a nice source of information to complement your magazine." I want to thank these drummers, along with the hundreds of other readers who wrote in. We were overwhelmed.

One more point about *MD Wire*: It's absolutely free. All you need to do to receive it is visit moderndrummer.com and sign up, no strings attached. It's just our way of saying thanks to our loyal readership for continuing to make *Modern Drummer* the #1 drumming magazine in the world.

Bill Miller

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Volume 31 Number 1

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MODERN DRUMMER magazine (**ISSN** 0194-4533) is published monthly by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.**, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. PERIODICALS MAIL POSTAGE paid at Cedar Grove, NJ 07009 and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2007 by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.** All rights reserved. Reproduction without the permission of the publisher is prohibited.

EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING/ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES: MODERN DRUMMER Publications, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Tel: (973) 239-4140. Fax: (973) 239-7139. Email: mdinfo@moderndrummer.com.

MODERN DRUMMER welcomes manuscripts and photographic material, however, cannot assume responsibility for them. Such items must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: US and Canada $34.97 per year; $56.97, two years. Other international $49.97 per year, $97.97, two years. Single copies $5.99.

SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE: Modern Drummer, PO Box 480, Mt. Morris, IL 61054-0480. **Change of address:** Allow at least six weeks for a change. Please provide both old and new address. Call (800) 551-3786 or (815) 734-1170.

MUSIC DEALERS: Modern Drummer is available for resale at bulk rates. Direct correspondence to Modern Drummer Retail Vision, 2 Maple Street, Suite 6, Middlebury, VT 05753, (800) 381-1288.

REPRINTS: Reprints of Modern Drummer articles can be supplied on request. Contact Tracy Kearns at MD for details: (973) 239-4140.

INTERNATIONAL LICENSING REPRESENTATIVE: Robert Abramson & Associates, Inc., Libby Abramson, President, PO Box 740346, Boyton Beach, FL 33474-0346, abramson@prodigy.net.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Modern Drummer, PO Box 480, Mt. Morris, IL 61054.

MEMBER: National Association Of Music Merchants, American Music Conference, Percussive Arts Society, Music Educators National Conference, Percussion Marketing Council, Music Magazine Publishers Association

MODERN DRUMMER ONLINE:
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Chris Adler & Billy Kilson

Leave it to *MD* to feature two cutting-edge drummers in one issue. Chris Adler is leading the field of speed-oriented metal, with a combination of technique and musicality that's sorely lacking in many other of the genre's "stars."

Billy Kilson brings the same sort of intensity to his jazz playing. I saw him at the Montreal Drum Fest a few years ago, and he knocked me out. Chris Botti is a lucky guy to have Billy behind him. It's nice to read Billy's comments honoring the greats of the past, too. Thanks for two excellent stories. **Joseph Rye**

Mapex very much appreciates *MD*'s cover feature on Chris Adler. However, there are a few discrepancies in Chris's equipment listing. Chris uses Saturn series drums; Mapex has not used the "Saturn Pro" name since 2004. Also, the finish is Transparent Cherry Red/CY, not cherry walnut. Finally, in addition to the Gibraltar rack and hardware listed, Chris also uses Mapex cymbal boom arms, X-hats, and other accessories. **Joe Hibbs**
Mapex USA

Gary Chester

Rick Mattingly

Thanks for the wonderful article on Gary Chester in the October *MD*. I had the honor of studying with Gary. Over our various sessions, he said many things that have stayed with me ever since. When I had difficulty playing a complex passage, he said, "You've got two arms, two legs, and a brain. So where's the problem?" That one sentence put an end to my self-imposed sense of limitations. Later, when I questioned why I should learn such difficult things when I was only playing easy stuff on my gigs, Gary said, "It's better to have abilities and not use them than to not have abilities when you need them." With that, he set me on a lifelong journey towards personal excellence. Today, when "personal leadership" and "self-empowerment" are subjects much talked about, Gary Chester is still my main inspiration. **Robert Strobel**

Woodshed

Thank you for your recent series of Woodshed articles. It's fascinating to be able to see inside the practice facilities of top drummers. Keep these articles coming! **Jeff Hanley**

Jim Riley

Great story on Jim Riley in your September issue! Jim has been through a lot, and he offered some great advice. As a twenty-one-year-old drummer myself, with dreams of moving to Nashville and touring with a country

Gene Ambo

artist, I found the article very inspiring. I love reading stories of drummers who've gone from playing clubs to playing arenas. Please keep the Nashville drummers coming. They're talented players who are too easily overlooked. **David Whitaker**

Ludwig Spotlight

It was a pleasant surprise to see the article on the revitalized Ludwig Drum Company in the September issue. When I started playing drums, I spent many hours thumbing through the latest catalog, dreaming of the day that I'd have a real Ludwig drumset. I eventually got that set—and, over the years, several other Ludwig kits as well. Still, like many other drummers my age, I eventually migrated to other brands.

I'm happy to say that I own a new Classic Maple kit that looks and sounds great. It's a good—and familiar—feeling to be sitting behind a Ludwig kit again. **Donn Deniston**

Dropped Beat

The October *Ask A Pro* item featuring Morgan Rose inadvertently included a dated photo of Morgan playing on a drumkit he no longer endorses. Morgan has been a Pearl artist since 2004.

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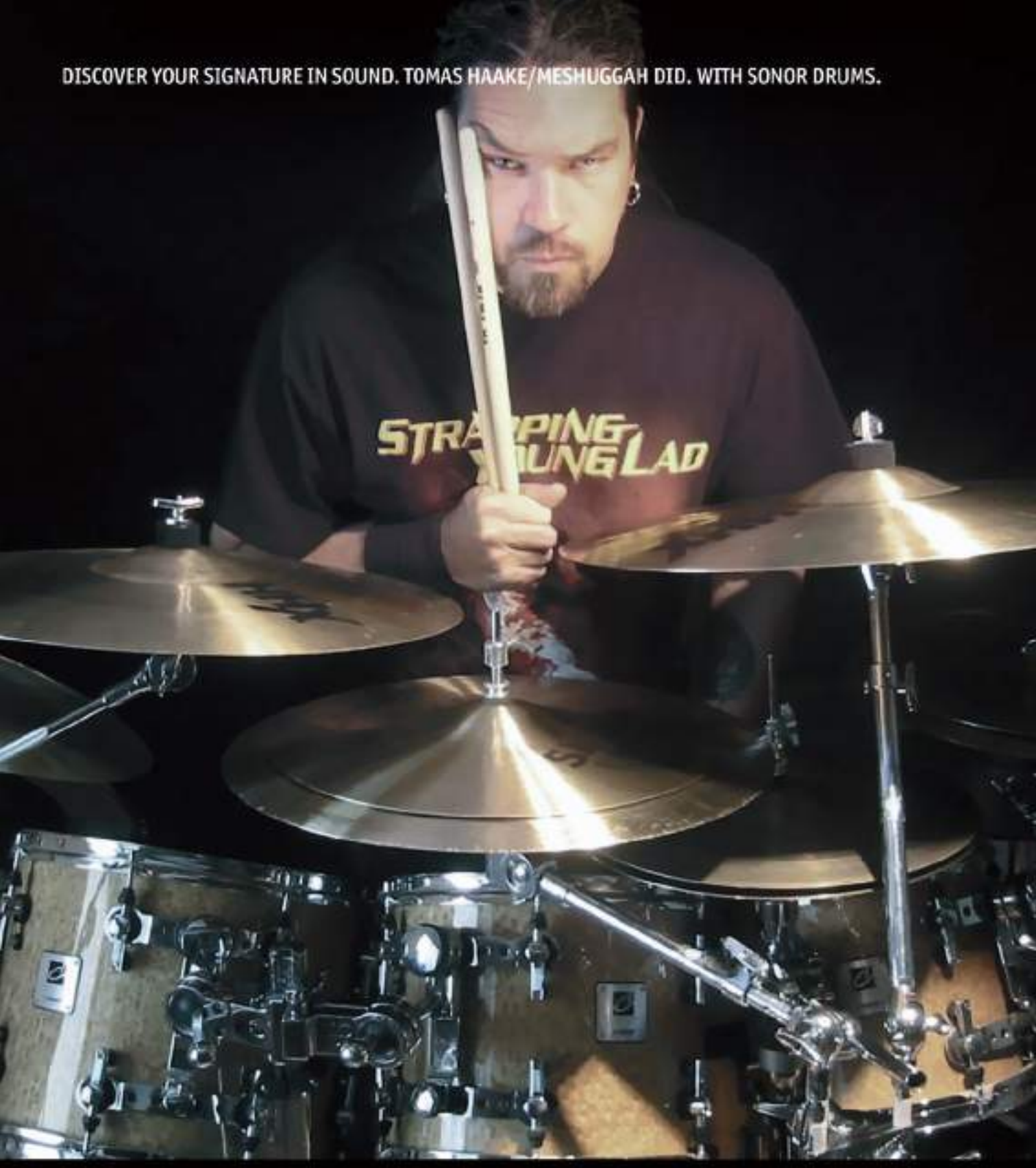

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Camco...Or Not?

I got my drumkit when I was young, and I'm curious about its origin and shell composition. It's a Camco set, but it doesn't have the "cloud-style" badges that I've seen all over the Internet. I've provided some pictures of the kit for your viewing and analyzing pleasure. It includes a 16x22 kick, 8x12 and 9x13 rack toms, and a 16x16 floor tom. The kick and the rack toms have reinforcing rings, but the floor tom doesn't. I'm also curious about the inlay. Any info you can give would be greatly appreciated.
Tyler Friesen

MD historian Harry Cangany replies, "In 1979, the Camco name and a half interest in the Camco pedal were sold to Tama. The drum tooling, dies, and patents, along with the other half interest in the pedal, were sold to Drum Workshop.

"Tama created a Camco-like lug (they couldn't use the original design, since DW owned it), and they made some high-end maple sets with the inlay you have. So it's likely that your kit was made in 1979 or '80. Tama discontinued their Camco drum line shortly thereafter, but they continued to use the Camco name on single and double bass drum pedals."

Using Gary Chester's Book

I've had Gary Chester's book for a while, and I've worked on it a bit, but I haven't really committed myself to it. My question is: Can a student fully benefit from the material without having the exact drumkit setup as Gary recommends: three hi-hats and a left-side floor tom? I do have an auxiliary snare to my left, and I've been using crash cymbals to simulate the additional hi-hats on left and right.
Steve Trovao

We forwarded your question to Chris Adams, who worked closely with Gary and is the author of *New Breed II*, the follow-up to Gary's original book. She replies, "As a former student of Gary Chester and a teacher of the *New Breed* systems, I'll gladly answer your question.

"Yes, a student can fully benefit from the material without having three hi-hats and a left-side floor tom. That setup was what Gary arrived at in his teaching studio, finding it to meet his needs in playing what he called 'open arm position' and 'territorial rights.' This is addressed in *The New Breed*, in the section 'Concepts: Part 1.'

"Obviously not everyone has access to all this gear, but that shouldn't stop anyone from pursuing the *New Breed* studies. Also, each drummer is unique, and his or her choices of tones and colors might be another reason to use a different setup. By experimenting, as you have done with your auxiliary snare to the left and substituting cymbals for hi-hats, you can still get the benefits of learning to lead with your left hand as well as with your right, and developing a strong center and balance on your kit. Just be sure that everything is set up comfortably within reach.

"The benefits that you'll reap from committed study of *The New Breed* will be very rewarding. I had a student say to me just the other day, 'Wow, this stuff is hard! But when you get it, you feel like a genius.' So dig in and enjoy the process."

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Ride Cymbal Positioning

I've always been mystified as to why the majority of drummers position their primary ride cymbal on the right side of their kits (for a right-handed drummer). For the sake of efficiency and speed, my ride is between my hi-hat and left rack tom. With this set-up, switching from my hi-hat to my ride cymbal is practically effortless. The position also lends itself to beginning a left-to-right drum fill more naturally. Could you explain why I'm in the minority with my setup?
D. Blum

Part of it is pure drumset physics. When the drumset was first developed, there was no "ride" cymbal. That didn't start to happen until well into the big band era of the 1940s. Prior to that time, bass drums were generally pretty large, and they provided a platform for mounting drums and sound effects such as blocks, bells, and small cymbals.

Ride cymbals became larger and more prominent with the advent of small-group bebop jazz in the 1950s. In that style, drummers played extended—and often very fast—patterns on their ride cymbals. In order to do this, they found it convenient to place that cymbal on the bass drum, mounted fairly low, where it was relatively easy to play for long periods. The "ride tom," or what we now usually call the rack tom, had already been established in its position on the left side of the bass drum, directly in front of the snare drum (when viewed from the drummer's perspective). So this pretty much dictated that the ride cymbal would go on the right side of the bass drum. Since most drummers were right-handed, this was a logical position for that reason, too.

That position ultimately became the accepted spot for a ride cymbal, and drummers (and drum manufacturers) simply got used to putting it there. However, as drumset configurations have changed and drum hardware has become more flexible, the positioning of drums and cymbals has become a much less "generic" proposition. If putting your ride cymbal on your left side works for you, there's no reason not to do it.

^^ In 1938, Gene Krupa had lots of cymbals mounted on his bass drum, but none that would qualify as a "ride" cymbal.

By the late 1940s, Big Sid Catlett had a single, medium-sized cymbal mounted to his right, fairly low on the bass drum. vv

^^ Chico Hamilton's kit, with its large, bass drum–mounted ride cymbal, was typical of 1950s bebop drumsets. This position for the ride cymbal became the standard until larger kits with more rack toms became popular a generation later.

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The WARRIOR Kit is a customized Dominion kit set specifically for Travis Smith and is not available for purchase.

Dave Weckl

On Practicing Toward Success

Q I'm twelve, and I've been playing drums for just a year. When you started out, how much did you practice? What types of rudiments did you do, and which are most important to you now? Do you practice on the drumkit...a practice pad...a pillow...or something else? Finally, in today's music world, is there hope for me to make it big? Any advice would be great. **Reid Schultz**

A Thanks for writing, Reid. When I first started, at around eight years of age, I practiced as much as I could. I continued that pattern through college, and as much as possible afterwards. But when employment and other life responsibilities come into play, practice time becomes less and less available. That's why it's very important to have the sticks in your hands as much as possible and to play as often as you can at a young age.

I suggest practicing mostly on the drumset itself. If this is your main focus and what you want to do, you have to practice on the instrument. Pads are okay for technical development, but I don't recommend pillows. Much of the way I play has to with the rebound of the stick, and soft surfaces like pillows will not provide the necessary bounce.

As far as rudiments go, they should all be learned and practiced as part of your foundational development, but my opinion is that they should only be used for that. The idea is to make music on the drums, within the style you're playing. So what you play should be based on the feeling you want to create, not on a rudiment. So much of drumming (or anything else artistic, really) is like that: You learn the basic techniques, you practice them until they become second-nature, and then you try to apply them in an artistic, musical way.

As for "making it big," don't worry about that right now. If you practice hard, get good enough, and can make the people around you feel good when you play, you can certainly become an in-demand drummer. This will allow you to survive by playing music, which should be the first goal.

The above actually inspires another thought, which is that I think all drummers should learn keyboards too—partly to be able to play a little bit, but more to gain knowledge of how to write music. Remember, the music business is a business, so don't sell yourself short by only being a drummer.

Developing as much musical ability as possible is something I firmly believe in. I've also always believed in following your dreams and letting no one stop you—especially yourself. Just work hard, get good teachers, and follow your dream. The "making it big" part may well take care of itself—but not without the hard work and dedication.

Alex Solca

Terry Bozzio

Not More Cowbell

Q On the Andy Taylor song "Take It Easy" from the *American Anthem* soundtrack, there appears to be a double cowbell struck on the "&" of each measure in the main melody line. Did you play this with your left hand or left foot? My guess is that it's done with your foot, given your penchant for polyrhythms and multi-limb interdependence. **Shawn Ruden**

A It's been a long time since I listened to that track, but to my recollection, everything I recorded with Andy was done to a click or a beat box. So I think the cowbell is either electronic or somebody else's overdub. I know I did no fancy coordination stuff with Andy, and I'm very flattered that someone might think I did—or could!

Robert Knight

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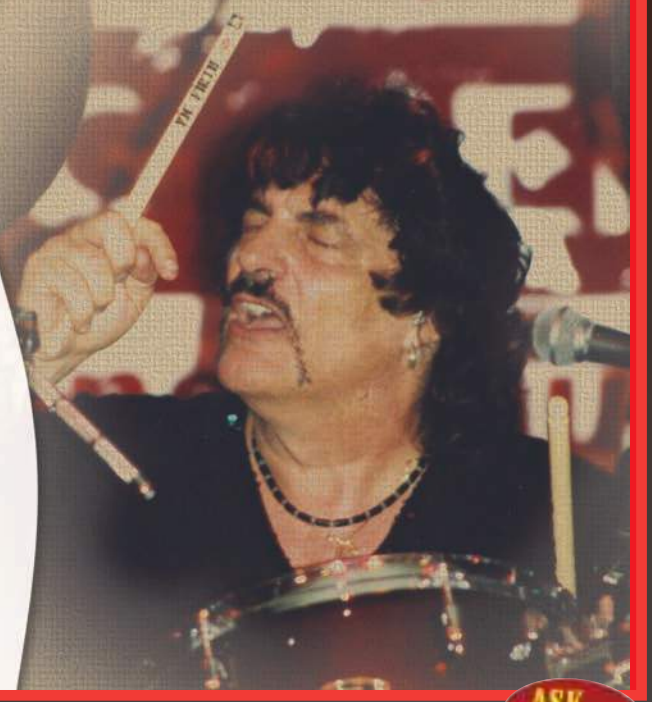
CARMINE APPICE

(Vanilla Fudge, Cactus)

Text and photo by Joe Perry



Place of birth: Brooklyn, New York
Influences: Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich
Favorite food: Italian
Favorite fast food: White Castle hamburgers
Favorite drink: Chocolate shake
Favorite TV show: The Discovery Channel
Other instruments I play: bass, guitar, keyboards
If I wasn't a drummer, I'd be: A chemist
Vehicles I drive: Audi A4, 1971 DeTomaso Pantera, 1962 Jaguar Mark 9
Hobbies/interests: Movies, collecting classic cars
Most prized possession: An art deco table given to me by Rod Stewart
Place I'd like to visit: The pyramids of Egypt
Biggest venue played: Atlanta Pop Festival, 1971, with Cactus, for 250,000 people
Most unusual venue played: On a flatbed truck in the early '70s
Musicians I'd like to work with: Led Zeppelin
Songs I wish I'd played on: Phil Collins' "In The Air Tonight"
Most memorable performance: *The Ed Sullivan Show*, 1968, with Vanilla Fudge, for fifty million viewers
Person I'd like to have a conversation with: Ringo Starr

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Black Stone Cherry's
John Fred Young
Keepin' It In The Family

Rick Mattingly

Black Stone Cherry drummer John Fred Young is quick to cite his uncle, Kentucky HeadHunters drummer Fred Young, as his biggest inspiration. But John Fred nearly blew it one day when he was young.

"I went upstairs in The HeadHunters' practice house, where Uncle Fred keeps all his drums and cymbals," John Fred recalls. "I found these old K Zildjian cymbals from Turkey. I didn't know what they were, so I set them up and started bashing away. Fred walked in, and he never gets mad about anything. But when he saw what I was doing, he said, very calmly, 'If you hit those cymbals one more time, I'm going to kill you.'

"But Fred has been very supportive," John Fred continues. "He bought me a Remo Junior Pro kit when I was five, and when I was in junior high and decided to get serious about drumming, Fred taught me all the rudiments. I used his WFL wood snare drum—the one he played on all The HeadHunters' albums—on most of the tracks of our album."

Growing up with The HeadHunters as mentors (John Fred's father is HeadHunters guitarist/songwriter Richard Young), John Fred and his bandmates learned a lot about classic rock. "The HeadHunters' practice house, which we've pretty much taken over, is filled with pictures of Cream, Hendrix, Howlin' Wolf, and all the greats," John Fred says. "We're a real southern rock family. We live on a farm and we've got cows, horses, and pigs, and we raise tobacco and cut hay. And my dad, uncle, and cousins have been playing rock 'n' roll since they were kids. So there's a lot of tradition there."

Like The HeadHunters did on songs like "Dumas Walker," Black Stone Cherry has incorporated some local color into their music. "Backwoods Gold" tells about a local clothing store owner who ran a moonshining business next door to the police department. "Rain Wizard" is based on an encounter Richard Young had with the subject of some Kentucky folklore.

"We wanted to bring in some stories from home to put our own twist on the music," John Fred says. "We want to be thought of as a classic rock band, but you've got to put your own personality in it." **Rick Mattingly**

Trapt's
Aaron Montgomery
Drumming Under Control

"I compare drumming to various spices. If the groove has too much salt or too much pepper, then you're going to be all savored out." So says Aaron Montgomery, the "chef" in Trapt's kitchen. His style, his groove, and his vibe all emanate from drummers who could add flavor while still bringing the rock. "My style comes from early '90s drummers like Matt Cameron and Dave Krusen," Montgomery says. "My concept also comes from guys like Tony Williams and Elvin Jones. Jones' relentless attack of polyrhythms blew me away. And his and Tony's whole approach to driving a band is something I've always tried to keep in mind."

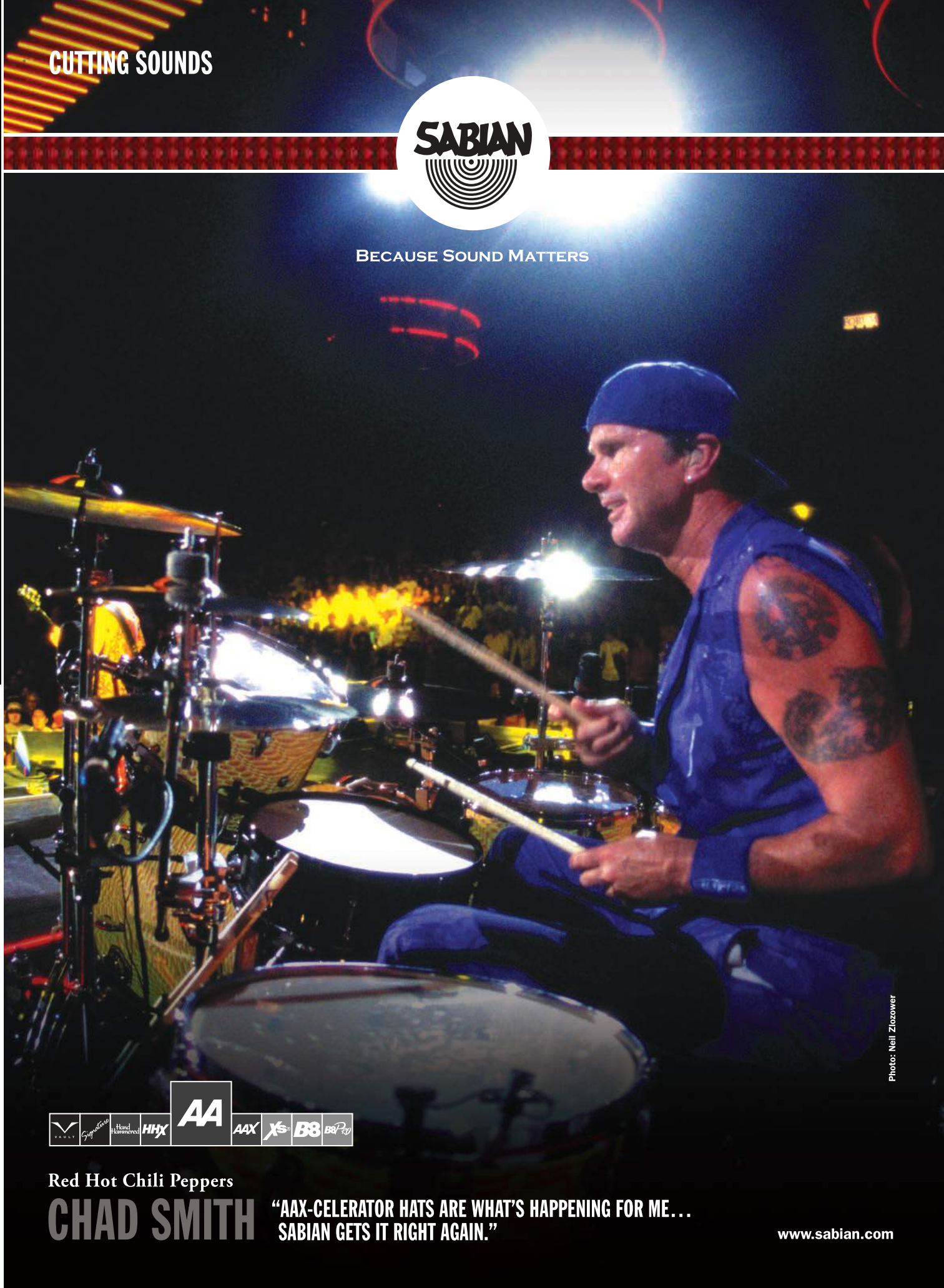
Montgomery excels at building dynamics. He's able to add nuance while still locking in with Trapt bassist Peter Charell. There's also the influence of producer Don Gilmore (Pearl Jam, Linkin Park, Good Charlotte). With Gilmore in the studio, Montgomery soaked up the ambience. "Pearl Jam's *Ten* was one of the most influential records for me in terms of turning me into a rock drummer," Aaron says. "Don had me try different things. His overwhelming experience fostered a creative environment that blew my mind."

Trapt's sophomore offering, *Someone In Control*, is Montgomery's first recording with the band. It highlights playing that sounds locked and precise. "You can be told until you're blue in the face how a groove should sound," the drummer says. "But it's intangible. It's one of those unspoken things. It's a contrast, an ebb and flow."

Throughout the opus, Montgomery's attack varies from modern to classic metal, and he likes it that way. "There are moments on the record where I get to show a full range of dynamics," he says. "From thunderous to very subtle, pianissimo-type playing. The contrasts are very cool."

Montgomery has been playing drums for nearly twenty years. All along he recognized what's needed to get to the next level. "You have to give a little bit of yourself everyday towards being a better drummer," he says, "whether it's practice-pad stuff or on the kit, working with a metronome, reading, or just listening to music." **Steven Douglas Losey**

Micah Smith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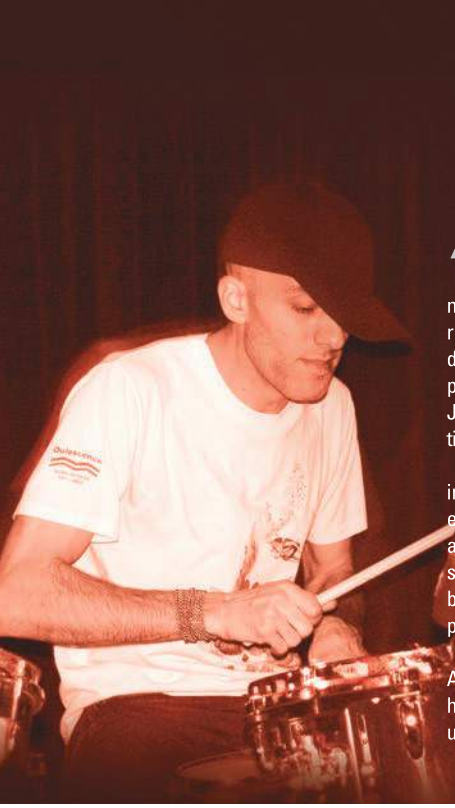

Dub Trio's Joe Tomino Real-Time Remix

"Even though dub is at the bottom of every song you hear," says Dub Trio drummer Joe Tomino, "we've never put any boundaries on it." Indeed, the Brooklyn band's recent LP, *New Heavy*, expands on its reggae-rich 2004 debut, *Exploring The Dangers Of*, by incorporating rowdy punk and crunching metal into its more chilled-out Jamaican-influenced material. In that sense, the album's title is as descriptive as the band's name.

Need a refresher on dub? It evolved from reggae and ska in the 1970s, when DJs would remix records by adding effects like reverb and echo, emphasizing the rhythm section and often removing all but a few snippets of vocals. On stage, Dub Trio manages to manipulate its own music as it's being played, using samples of dub-style sounds and microphones looped through signal-processing units.

"I'll count off a tune," Tomino explains, "and we'll play the A section. Then maybe the B section is much more dub and has more room for improvisation and effects, so I can bring up a delay or a reverb. While the groove is still going, I can turn the effect on and off and tweak its parameters in real time. There's a lot of one-handed drumming going on."

Tomino might use digital delay on parts of his kit to create a slap-back, echoing effect—or he might just create that sound manually, by, say, striking his snare or a small timbale in a series of progressively softer strokes. It's an amazing thing to see. "It's very interactive," Joe says. "It's fun to watch and pick apart live."

Tomino and his bandmates, bassist Stu Brooks and guitarist DP Holmes, formed Dub Trio in 2003 after playing together in Actual Proof. They've done widely varied session work, both individually and as a unit, and Tomino toured Europe last year with the reunited Fugees. But for now Dub Trio is the main event, and the group's anything-goes aesthetic allowed for the stylistic forward leap of *New Heavy*, for which most of the sound manipulation was created during postproduction. "On this record," says Joe, "we really utilized the studio rather than saying, 'Hey, let's just capture what everybody hears live.'"

Michael Parillo

Joel Stevenett

Meeting The Videogame Challenge

Joel Stevenett loves the variety of work he does as a drummer. One of his favorite gigs is playing drums on the soundtracks to videogames for Xbox and PlayStation. "It's a big industry, and it's a lot of fun," Stevenett says. "A good friend of mine, Chuck Myers, hooked me up with some of the earlier games. Sony America, one of the divisions, is located here in Salt Lake City. When I wasn't on the road back in Nashville, I was flying here during the week to do sessions for videogames."

Stevenett says playing for videogames can require him to cover all sorts of bases. "It could be anything," the drummer explains, "from programmed stuff, looping, and samples, to all live drums. One game I really enjoyed playing on was called *RalliSport Challenge* for Xbox, which is a race car game where you can pick any country to race in. I remember the producer called to tell me that he wanted to hear ice, snow, and dirt from the drums. I was thinking, 'What the heck are you talking about?' But I went to work and thought, What would I want to hear as I round the corner and dirt is flying up? Maybe some cool tom roll, coming off the edge of the rim onto the tom. And for some of the ice features, I'd play some China and stacked cymbals.' I did it, and the client loved it." Stevenett has worked on such recent titles as *Twisted Metal: Head On* for PSP, and *Dance Revolution* and *Downhill Domination* for PlayStation 2.

While he still tours and does some occasional gigs with Jo Dee Messina (he's worked with her for three and a half years), Stevenett moved to Salt Lake two years ago, where he says he's happy to have settled. "I like being among the mountains with my family," he admits. "This gig is so great because I get to come home at night and be with my wife and baby daughter. I get to rock 'n' roll, hit things for a living, and be with my family."

Robyn Flans

Ronin's
Kaspar Rast
Master Of Minimalist Funk

The versatile Kaspar Rast was born in Zurich, Switzerland in 1972, and has been playing drums since he was six years old. Rast trained at the famed JMS school in Zurich and at the Drummers Collective in New York City. His list of concerts and tours covers Europe, America, and South Africa. Playing drums and percussion, he's worked in exceptionally diverse musical formations and projects, both in performance and in the studio.

Rast's most visible international project to date is with his long-time friend and collaborator, keyboardist/composer Nik Bärtsch's band Ronin (www.nikbaertsch.com). The group just released its fourth album, *Stoa*, on the venerated ECM label.

Ronin's music is characterized by complex, interlocking patterns, modular constructions, repetitive motifs, and polymetric pulses. Bärtsch has described the music as "Zen funk." (Imagine James Brown jamming with Steve Reich.) Explains Rast, "Ronin sometimes works with emptiness, trying to create a musical haiku, if you will. This energy interplay is an important part of the group.

"When playing with Ronin," Rast continues, "one of the challenging things is that, due to all of the interlocking patterns, we have to be super tight from the first second on, otherwise it can't groove. It's almost a rhythmic balancing act, because the whole band is the groove. Ronin thinks differently. Sometimes we describe ourselves as a musical biosystem, because everything is so interrelated."

With Ronin, Rast's approach to polyrhythms rests on the fact that, as he says, "Everybody in the group acts as 'a drummer.' We all have the important job of keeping time. Sometimes the other guys play the compound meter, while I'm keeping a backbeat groove in 4/4 behind them." Other times, Rast creates deliciously syncopated polymetric patterns that propel the band ever forward.

On the group's previous album, *Live*, one of Rast's characteristic sounds is his cutting-edge snare drum's "poingk." "With Ronin, I can do so many things just focusing on my bass drum, hi-hat, and snare drum; the possibilities are infinite. I'll use the toms and cymbals to signal transitions. You may have a large vocabulary, but you may not want to use all those words all the time."

Along with Ronin, Rast plays with Bärtsch's Mobile and Asita Hamdis's Bazaar Band.

Robert Kaye

NEWS

Underoath, with drummer **Aaron Gillespie,** is back on the road.

Victor Indrizzo is on Paul Stanley's solo CD, *Live To Win*.

Congratulations to **Charlie Drayton** and The Divinyls on being inducted into the Australian Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame. Also present at the ceremony was original drummer Richard Harvey (not pictured).

Jeff Nunnery is on tour with Blanco Diablo.

Yesod Williams is on Pepper's new album, *No Shame*.

Matt Cole is on Hymns' debut album, *Brother/Sister*.

Between The Buried And Me are out on the road, with **Black Richardson** at the helm.

Branden Morgan is playing with Misery Signals.

Dicky Latour is on the road with The Fully Down.

Daniel Davison is on tour with Norma Jean, behind their latest, *Redeemer*.

Oliver Williams has been on the road with Vaeda.

Jacki Stone is on Vains Of Jenna's debut release, *Lit Up/Let Down.*

Peter Anderson is on Ben Connelly's recently released album, *Over You*.

Mark Trojanowski is on Sister Hazel's new album, *Absolutely*.

Jacko is on the new Sha Na Na album, *One More Saturday Night*.

Danny Frankel played drums and bongos on "Love For Sale" on the soundtrack to the movie *The Black Dahlia*. He can also be heard on new releases by John Lithgow, Ajani, k.d. lang (*Reintarnation*), and Puerto Rican group Viva Nativa.

The Makah Burl Cajon with padded seat, rubber feet and built-in snare sound from Meinl.

DRUM DATES This month's important events in drumming history

Gene Krupa was born on 1/15/09.

Cozy Cole passed away on 1/29/81, **John Guerin** on 1/5/04, Jefferson Airplane's **Spencer Dryden** on 1/10/05, and Traffic's **Jim Capaldi** on 1/28/05.

On 1/24/62, The Oscar Peterson Trio (with drummer **Ed Thigpen** and bassist Ray Brown) records music from *West Side Story*.

On 1/14/67, The Monkees, with **Micky Dolenz** as their TV drummer, have a number-1 hit with "I'm A Believer." It's written by Neil Diamond and features session great **Gary Chester** on drums.

On 1/17/69, Led Zeppelin's self-titled debut is released, featuring the great **John Bonham**.

On 1/15/04, **Yamaha** introduces the first sampler on an electronic module with their DTXtreme II.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Bob Moses
(jazz great): 1/28/48

Max Roach
(jazz legend): 1/10/24

Corky Laing
(Mountain): 1/28/48

Dave Weckl
(solo artist): 1/8/60

Jimmy Cobb
(Miles Davis): 1/20/29

George "Funky" Brown
(Kool & The Gang): 1/15/49

Jeff "Tain" Watts
(jazz great): 1/20/60

Ed Shaughnessy
(ex-Tonight Show): 1/29/29

Eddie Bayers
(Nashville studio great): 1/28/49

Steven Adler
(ex-Guns N' Roses): 1/22/65

Grady Tate
(soul/jazz great): 1/14/32

Phil Collins
(ex-Genesis/solo): 1/31/51

Dave Grohl
(Foo Fighters): 1/14/69

Nick Mason
(Pink Floyd): 1/27/45

Paul Wertico
(ex-Pat Metheny): 1/5/53

Jason Bittner
(Shadows Fall): 1/11/70

Aynsley Dunbar
(rock veteran): 1/10/46

Fred White
(ex-Earth Wind & Fire): 1/13/55

Jon Wysocki
(Staind): 1/17/71

To hear some of the artists mentioned in this month's *Update*, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.

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Yamaha Tour Custom Drums

A New Contender In The Affordable Maple Range

by Paul Bielewicz

KEY NOTES

- Great sound quality and versatile sizes
- Well-designed hardware for the touring drummer
- Certain design elements can make assembly and adjustment difficult

Several drum companies have recently begun to offer all-maple drums at low prices, thanks largely to improved manufacturing methods and overseas production. Yamaha has followed suit with the introduction of their Tour Custom series, which is made in the company's Indonesian factory. The new line features all-maple shells, road-worthy hardware, and versatile combinations of sizes.

MD's review set consisted of a five-piece configuration in Brown Sunburst lacquer. The 2FS shell pack consisted of 9x10 and 10x12 rack toms, a 14x16 floor tom, a 6x14 snare, and an 18x22 bass drum. The accompanying hardware package included two cymbal boom stands, a hi-hat stand, a snare stand, and a bass drum pedal.

The kit shipped unassembled, and the assembly process frankly required some time and expertise. To aid in assembly, Yamaha provided a combination drumkey/hex wrench. Later, that same key/wrench was used for quicker set-up and tuning.

The Yamaha Tour Custom kit comes in a shell pack that consists of 9x10 and 10x12 rack toms, a 14x16 floor tom, a 6x14 snare, and an 18x22 bass drum. It's also available with the hardware package shown here.

Construction Details

One construction element of the Tour Custom drums is new for Yamaha maple drums. That's their 60° R2 bearing edges. This bearing edge has a rounder profile, which creates more shell-to-head contact. According to Yamaha, this somewhat "vintage-style" edge gives the drums clarity in the lower frequencies, along with added warmth.

The maple used for the Tour Custom shells is Asian in origin, as opposed to North American rock maple. This material acts somewhat like mahogany or other woods with a more open grain structure. It's definitely not as hard as North American maple. But that's not necessarily a negative feature. Woods of this nature can contribute to a warmer, less pointed overall drum sound, which I deem a good thing.

The overall construction quality of this kit was unmistakable. One area where this was most apparent was in the high-gloss lacquer finish. Some mid-range kits are offered with a gloss lacquer finish, but few apply that lacquer even to the insides of the bass drum hoops. This is a small detail, but it shows that the low price of the Tour Custom kit was not achieved by cutting quality. The lacquer on the inside of the batter-side hoop is protected from the bass drum pedal by a small rubber gasket onto which the pedal clamps.

Hardware

Most of the stands on the Tour Custom kit feature innovations that make them applicable for use on the road. Despite being double-braced, they're not particularly heavy, nor are they bulky when folded. They're also quick to assemble and disassemble. The snare stand was hinged in the middle and folded in half evenly to take up less space. All cymbal stand boom arms collapsed into the body of the stand for easy storage.

The heavy-duty bass drum pedal featured a cast assembly and double-chain drive. The pedal folded flat by disconnecting the cast assembly with the hex-wrench end of the combo key.

Sound

To put it simply, the Tour Custom kit sounded great. When the toms were tuned high, they were very musical and bright. When tuned low, they were rich, deep, and mellow. The kit shipped with single-ply heads, which generally sound better at higher tensions, but they still sounded great at medium and lower tensions, without much hint of unevenness or "muddiness." The 10" and 12" toms accompanied the 16" floor tom well without sounding like anything was missing in between. This is a configuration being used more and more by drummers, and Yamaha was astute to recognize this.

The bass drum was rich and boomy, with a satisfying overtone. It was a little overpowering in a solo practice situation, but it blended in nicely with an amplified band. Slight muffling reduced the overtone significantly, and also removed some of the boominess for a more muffled thud. The drum was not very punchy, and there was a lot of chatter with the standard round beater on the bass drum pedal. Using a beater with a flatter head reduced the chatter and added a nice, punchy feel.

The snare drum was one of the best aspects of the kit. It could be tuned high for an almost piccolo-like ping, or very low for a raspy, jazzy, woody sound. Unlike a piccolo snare, when this drum was tuned high it had a lot of volume, body, and depth, without being piercing. At medium tension, the emphasis was on the "crack," but with nice overtones still present. The drum shipped with a 1" muffling ring, but it sounded great without it. With the ring, the drum sounded very dry and staccato, with nearly all of the overtones eliminated. Use of the ring would be a personal choice rather than a necessity.

Minor Annoyances

Despite the overall quality of the Tour Custom drums, there were a few design choices that caused me some frustration. For example, the drumkey-operated bolts that adjust the length of the bass drum spurs were located on the insides of the spurs. It was very difficult to get the large combo drumkey between the spur and the body of the bass drum in order to loosen the screw enough to extend the leg. Luckily, the screw hole was a through-hole, so the problem could be remedied by removing the screw and re-inserting it from the outside. But why wasn't it there in the first place?

The floor tom legs are secured with drumkey bolts instead of wingbolts. It was frustrating to have to reach for a key every time a slight adjustment to the height or angle of the floor tom was needed. Additionally, the angle of the drumkey bolt prevented the Yamaha combination key from turning a full revolution. The key went almost all the way around, but then the hex-wrench end would hit the body of the drum. This seemed like a situation where the convenience of a wingbolt would more than compensate for the mass it would add.

Conclusion

The Yamaha Tour Custom is an extremely high-quality kit at a reasonable price. It has its few minor design quirks, but it sounds great and would be adaptable to many different playing situations. The hardware is lightweight yet durable, and it utilizes many design innovations to fold up smaller and be quicker to set up and tear down.

Only time will tell how the Tour Custom will do against other low-priced all-maple kits. But its combination of utility, sound quality, and appearance should set it apart.

THE NUMBERS

Tour Custom shell pack $1,599
Complete kit with hardware package $2,149
(714) 522-9011, www.yamahadrums.com

New Meinl Mb20 Models

Punchy, Loud, And Complex

by Will Romano

KEY NOTES

- 24" Pure Metal ride is both screaming and subtle
- Medium heavy crashes are solid, loud, and sonically contoured
- Best suited for rock and hard rock applications

16" medium heavy crash

24" Pure Metal ride

The latest additions to Meinl's Mb20 line are the 24" Pure Metal ride (designed with Lamb of God's Chris Adler), and 16" and 18" medium heavy crashes. The names given to these new models immediately posed some questions for me. I had already seen, heard, played, and reviewed the initial Mb20s for *Modern Drummer*. I knew the Mb20 series was designed for drummers who play loud, heavy music. So what exactly did Meinl intend with "medium heavy" crashes? And would a "Pure Metal" ride be unruly and lacking in character? I didn't know the answer to these questions, but I was game to find out.

The Setup

Meinl was gracious enough to send along additional cymbals in their Mb20 and Mb10 lines for the purpose of sonic perspective and comparison. So my setup included an Mb10 10" splash, Mb10 14" medium Soundwave hi-hats, various crashes, and a ride. I was tempted to use the Mb20 10" Rock splash and Mb20 14" heavy Soundwave hi-hats that Meinl supplied. But I wanted to hear how well the lighter cymbals worked with their supposedly more aggressive new cousins. I was also using thin sticks to get a more accurate read on the colors the new Mb20s could generate.

16" Medium Heavy Crash

Let's take the most non-aggressive cymbal first. This dark platter produced a great spray of sound that seemed to go everywhere, followed by a long, multi-colored decay. It retained a bit of darkness in its overall tonality, while having the right amount of bright splash.

While I was impressed, this was hardly a surprise. Mb20 cymbals are made of 80% copper and 20% tin, with traces of silver. Every cymbal is crafted from an individual cast blank to create a focused punch, and each is hand hammered.

Wanting to test the 16" crash's true range, I decided to play it alongside a 17" Mb20 heavy crash and a 16" Mb10 medium crash. The medium heavy crash was a bit brighter than the 17" Mb20 heavy, while the 16" Mb10 medium was much thinner. So Meinl has indeed struck a middle ground between their heavy and medium offerings. After using the 16" medium heavy Mb20 in conjunction with other cymbals, I found it worked best as an added color in my sonic palette, rather than a "go-to" guy. It would serve well as a secondary or even tertiary cymbal on any rock or heavy rock kit.

18" Medium Heavy Crash

The 18" medium heavy crash was a different story. While it had similar projection to that of the 16" version, it was louder, heftier, and more focused. Interestingly, the consistent rush of noise coming from the 18" did not cover the dash of color produced by the 10" Mb10 splash (I could easily hear my accents) or the stick definition I garnered from the 14" medium Soundwave hi-hats.

I compared the 18" Mb20 medium heavy crash to an 18" Mb10 medium crash. The Mb10 definitely had more sizzle and hiss, but less bang. The

Mb20 medium heavy crash had fire and sharpness, and did not disguise its punch under a stray shroud of hiss. This might have something to do with the cymbal's lathing (long, thin circles), its brilliant finish, and its deeper hammered marks (as compared to the relatively smooth playing surface of the Mb10 medium). I believe the Mb20 medium crash was more contoured sonically because of the different physical textures it features in one package.

The 18" medium heavy crash also stacked up well against the 19" Mb20 heavy crash. The 19" was dark and gongy, while the 18" was more direct and compact. I could definitely hear how the punchier (and relatively brighter) 18" medium heavy could slip more easily into a variety of rock settings.

24" Mb20 Pure Metal Ride

Lamb Of God's Chris Adler set Meinl a daunting challenge. He wanted a ride cymbal that had so much personality that it could "stand up and control a rhythm, a kit, or even an entire band." Adler was happy with the results of the Pure Metal ride, so I was curious to see how it met his definition.

I'm used to smaller rides, so I knew I would have to make concessions just to avoid letting this heavy, 24" monster cause havoc within my setup. It fit, but just barely, within my medium-sized rack system (after a few adjustments and some maneuvering), covering the splash like a hovering, Ed Wood–ian UFO. In addition, there was only a few hairs' distance separating my crashes from the ride.

To my surprise, the massive cymbal responded exceptionally well, with a surprising degree of subtlety. It had a killer screaming tone, it moved a lot of air, it absorbed the stick bounce and shock very well (without my hand suffering), and its brilliant finish produced shimmering tones. (I believe my thin sticks brought out many voices of the ride that I might not have heard otherwise.) When I "shanked" the cymbal's surface with the side of the stick, accented flairs garnered extra color. The cymbal's design (including the mini-mountain of a bell and the brilliant finish) allowed me to hear all of the many overtones ascending and descending around my ears.

This gargantuan ride also worked very well with its sonically and physically smaller cousins: the 16" medium heavy, 18" medium heavy, 17" Mb20 heavy, and 19" Mb20 heavy crashes. When I hit the bell, its loud ping cut through the trashy hiss, while playing on its surface produced a great combination of build-up and stick definition, with no unwanted dissonance.

I recorded in a live situation using the Adler ride. In that setting it was borderline overpowering (it certainly filled the venue's open spaces), though it definitely did not lack in clarity. Without a doubt, the Pure Metal ride is seriously dangerous. Playing it was a little like standing on the edge of a cliff while hearing (and feeling) violent winds rush by your head. Truly moving.

Conclusion

For projection, loudness, and even a dose of complexity, Meinl's Mb20 medium heavy crashes and Pure Metal ride were sensational. Their power and personality won't fit into every musical situation. But if you're a rock or hard-rock drummer looking for something with a more colorful kick, you might want to give these a listen.

THE NUMBERS

16" Medium Heavy Crash $378
18" Medium Heavy Crash $452
24" Pure Metal Ride $780
(615) 227-5090, www.meinlcymbals.com

Quick Looks

Hornets Drumsticks

Hornets drumsticks are a brand new line that combine art and function. The "function" part refers to an ergonomic design that features contours made to fit the hand. Your thumb rests behind a wider portion, and your hand sits in a narrower area below the thumb. According to the folks at Hornets, this relaxes the thumb, reducing strain on the forearm tendon and increasing stamina.

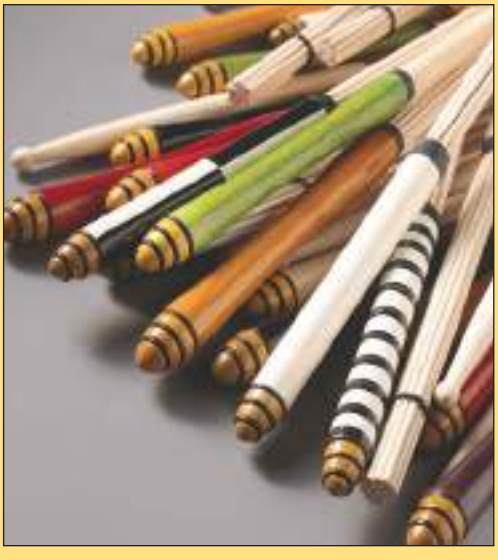
The "art" portion of the Hornets design refers to the fact that the sticks are available in a range of colors in the grip area. The butt ends of our sample sticks were yellow, with rubber O-rings imbedded in them. Those O-rings serve many purposes. The manufacturer says they reduce vibration and shock to the hand. When I played the sticks, they definitely had less of a shocky feel than a normal stick. But they by no means felt dead or lacking in rebound.

The rings also help keep your hands located on the sticks. (You know that feeling when a stick starts to slide, and you find yourself clutching desperately to the last half-inch? You won't have that problem with Hornets.) The rings can also be used to play cymbal rolls. You have to find just the right angle so that the rubber rings contact the surface of the cymbal, but it can be done.

I really enjoyed using the Hornets sticks. Their grip size and design made them easy to hold, and their great balance made them comfortable to play. And they looked striking while I was striking. The sticks are made of first-quality hickory and are pitch- and weight-matched by computer. (A set of rods is also available, though we didn't get to test them.) Stick sizes are 7A, 5A, 5B, and 2B, at a list price of $24.99 per pair.

(917) 399-8487,
www.hornetsdrumsticks.com

Chap Ostrander



Big Dog Hardware

Off The Leash In The US

by Russ Barbone

KEY NOTES

- Outstanding construction quality
- Affordable prices
- Excellent functionality
- Offset snare stand might annoy some players

The new Big Dog hardware line has a pretty international pedigree. It's designed by a team of UK-based engineers with some fairly impressive former drum-company credentials. It's manufactured in Taiwan, where the manufacturing facilities are turning out some pretty high-quality gear these days. And it's being distributed in the US by Big Bang (the folks who bring you Ahead drumsticks, Protection Racket bags, and Flix brushes, among other useful percussion items). The line is intended to compete with mid-line professional ranges from other manufacturers, at attractively lower prices.

Our review group included straight and boom cymbal stands, a throne, a snare stand, a hi-hat stand, and single and double bass drum pedals. All of the stands feature very heavy double-braced legs with substantial non-slip black rubber feet. All adjustment points use a pivoting-clamp design and are internally sleeved with plastic inserts for ease of adjustment and excellent holding power. The lockdown knobs are slightly larger than average, with a good grip zone. Another nice feature is the use of extended plastic-sleeved cymbal bases with thick felt washers to mount and protect your cymbals. All chrome plating is first rate, and a distinctive electric-blue winking "Big Dog" logo is on all the pieces.

The Pedals

The E001 single and E002 double pedals feature visually striking Big Dog blue footboards. The pedals are machined from aluminum, with large uprights for strength. They're very well made and should last a lifetime. They use side-mounted return springs with lockable tension adjusters, have beater angle and height adjustments, and use two Allen keys to vary the footboard angle. The double drive chains move through a felt-lined track for quiet operation. (Single-chain versions are also available.) Sealed ball bearings are used at the pivot points on the main shafts.

E004 Double

E003 Single

E001 Pro Single

E002 Pro Double

The bottoms of the baseplates are rubber-coated to prevent slipping (or the scratching of wood floors). Reversible beaters feature felt on one side and hard plastic on the other, and there are memory clamps on the beater shafts. Hoop clamps use side-mounted adjusting screws with rubber-coated clamp points to avoid marring your bass drum hoops.

The Stands

The B003 straight cymbal stand extends to a maximum height of 63", with a micro-fine tilt adjuster. The opposite side of each of the lockdowns features a hex nut that's recessed into the stand. Easy adjustments are standard fare, with absolutely no rocking or swaying. The B004 boom cymbal stand mimics the straight stand in every way, with the addition of a stout knurled 18" boom arm to get over those toms that would be in the way of a straight stand. The boom arm also has a memory clamp for quick set-ups. Excellent!

The B002 hi-hat stand has the standard adjustments—spring tension, bottom hat tilter—as well as spring-loaded spurs to stop "creep," a very wide drive chain, and a beautiful blue footboard. The top extension uses a drumkey locking bolt instead of the wide Big Dog wingbolt, which I found a little annoying. The clutch has a

SNARE DRUM OF THE MONTH

by Michael Dawson

PREMIER MODERN CLASSIC GEN-X

HOW'S IT SOUND?

The Modern Classic Gen-X snare strikes a fine balance between modern design and vintage sound. While the mechanical elements of this drum—like the Nickel Drumworks throw-off—are cutting-edge, Premier's craftsmen have also incorporated ideas from classic American drum-making (deep snare beds, rounded bearing edges) in an effort to replicate the much sought-after vintage snare sound.

For those of you who are looking for that type of snare, the Gen-X's rich and creamy tone might be just the thing. It's not a super precise–sounding drum, so ghost notes had a tendency to blend together. But backbeats were full, solid, and musical, while rimshots brought out a series of singing overtones. Plus, the unique shell design of the Gen-X series, which consists of four inner plies of maple and two outer plies of birch, helps give this drum just enough "bite" to keep it from sounding muddy.

The drum also tunes up easily and sits well at a variety of tensions. It sounded great with the batter head loose and muffled, à la Al Jackson, or tight and wide open, Steve Jordan–style.

WHAT'S IT COST?

$5\frac{1}{2}$x14 ..... $419.99

www.premier-percussion.com

To hear this drum, log on to www.moderndrummer.com.

pretty wide height adjustment range.

While I'm on the subject, I wish *all* manufacturers would decrease the inner clutch shaft diameter in order to allow for the installation of a plastic sleeve to protect your top hi-hat cymbal. Rocking into bare metal clutch shafts—and often their threaded areas—will shorten the cymbal's life expectancy.

The snare stand's height range is from 17" to 26". The snare basket arms are fitted with thick black rubber holders that use a series of raised serrations to hold your snare drum without marring it. The basket utilizes a cradle design that's mounted on a 5" sideways shaft, which allows the snare basket to be positioned away from the stand's center point if needed. Some players who have thick legs will probably appreciate this feature. Others may find the design irritating, because it prohibits centering the drum directly over the main shaft. Minimum offset is 2"; maximum is 5". Again, the top shaft extension uses a drumkey bolt instead of the wide Big Dog knob. I would have preferred the larger knob.

The Throne

The F006 throne features height adjustment from 17" to 26" using a threaded shaft with a big locking collar. The seat is a large, contoured bicycle type with a black cloth center and electric blue vinyl sides with the logo on the back. The seat is 17" wide by 15" deep, and it proved very comfortable in extended sessions. The seat's locking collar is spring-loaded and recessed at the lock-down point for easy, ergonomic turning of the screw. Neat!

Summing Up

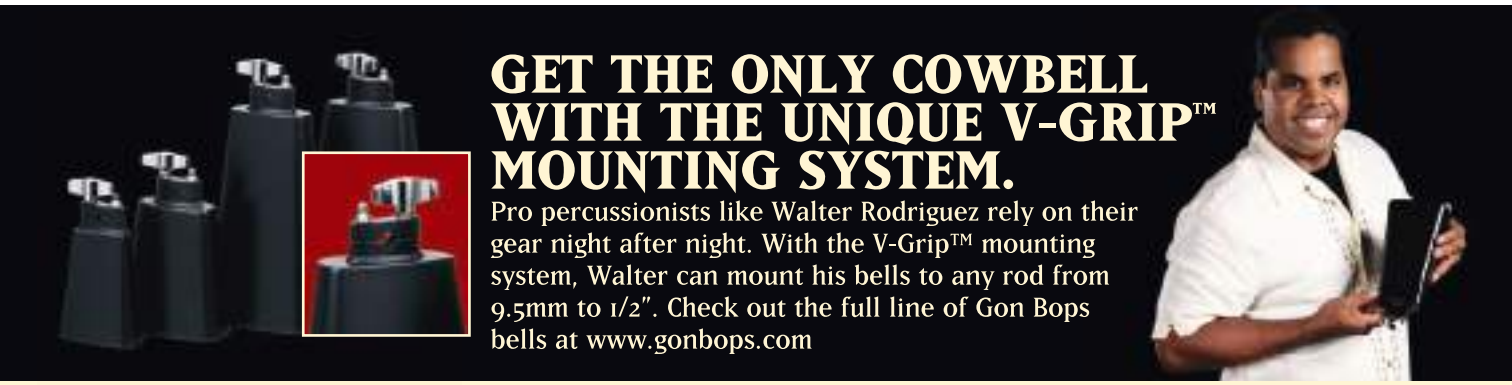
All of the Big Dog hardware functioned flawlessly under performance conditions. The cymbal stands proved solid and stable, and the seat was a joy to sit on. But my overall favorites were the pedals. They have a great range of adjustment and a silky-smooth feel, and they're visually appealing.

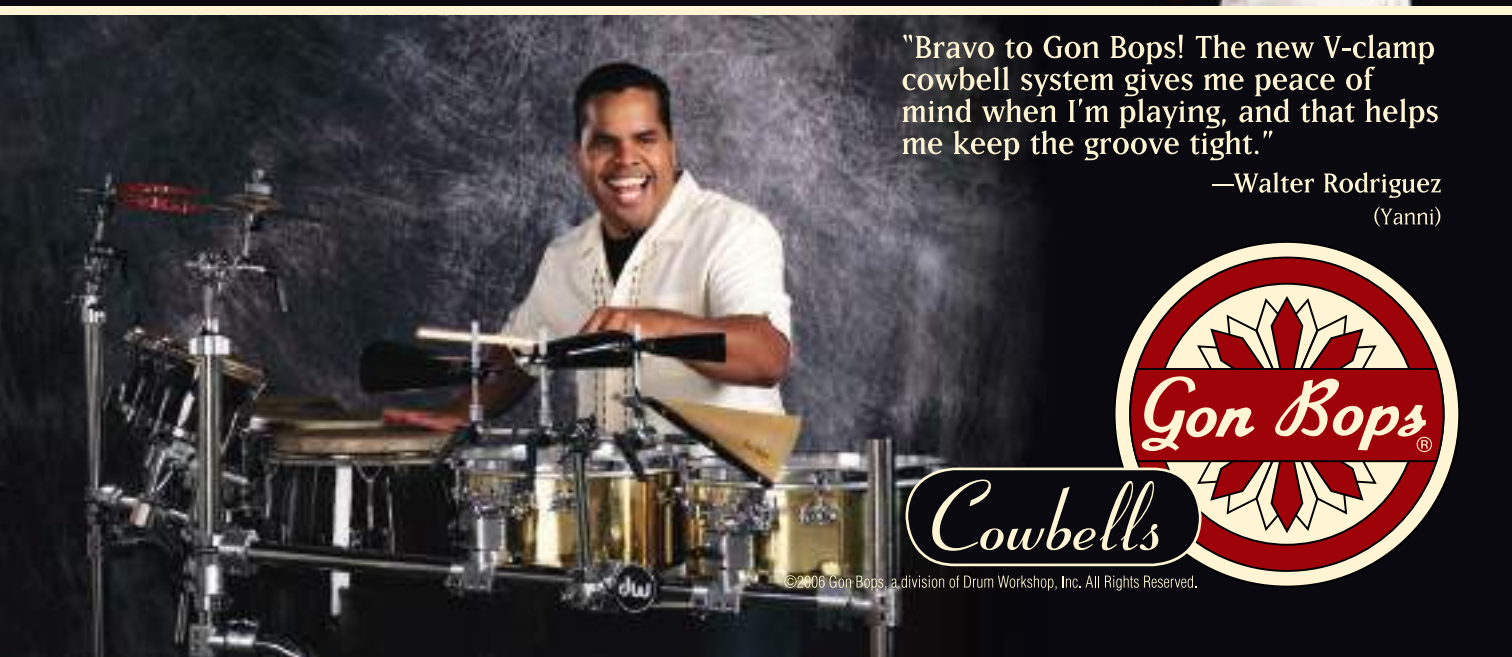
Just to nit-pick, Big Dog should switch the drumkey bolts used on the upper sections of the snare and hi-hat stands to their large lock-down knobs. And, as mentioned, the offset snare basket might not suit some players. Otherwise, this is a great debut for a new hardware line.

THE NUMBERS

B003 straight cymbal stand	$99.99
B004 boom cymbal stand	$117.99
F006 throne	$206.99
B002 hi-hat stand	$124.99
B001 snare stand	$99.99
E001 single pedal	$133.99
E002 double pedal	$349.99

(800) 547-6401, www.bigbangdist.com





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Roland HandSonic 10 Electronic Percussion Controller And RT-10 Series Triggers

Cool Stuff For Hand And Stick Drummers

by Michael Haid

This article takes a look at Roland's new HandSonic 10 Electronic Percussion Controller, along with a totally redesigned series of triggers for acoustic drums. (Roland has been busy!)

KEY NOTES

- HPD-10 offers authentic world percussion and modern techno sounds
- Pad placement is well designed for natural feel and authentic tones
- RT-10S dual snare trigger allows separate triggering from head and rim
- Triggers displayed some common triggering problems

The HPD-10

The HandSonic 10 is designed to be an affordable alternative to Roland's original HandSonic 15. As such, it may just be the most versatile, useful, entertaining, educational, *and* affordable piece of electronic gadgetry for drummers (and non-drummers) to come along in years. Why, you ask?

How It Works

There are ten triggering surfaces on the HPD-10: five main pads and five sub pads, all divided onto a circular 10"-diameter rubber surface. The five main pads each have individual sensitivity control, while the smaller sub pads that circle the upper diameter of the playing surface all share the same sensitivity. You can assign any of the HPD-10's 400-plus instruments to any of these pads. The 86 built-in drumset and hand percussion patterns are accessed through the advanced metronome function. These patterns offer practically every traditional drumming style imaginable, including authentic, percussion-rich world rhythms from around the globe. And they can be adjusted in tempo for recording or practicing.

You can make numerous sound-parameter changes to any of the 64 built-in kits, including the five factory kits that can be immediately accessed from the front panel with the push of a button. You can easily replace these with your own favorite custom kits, and you can also *undo* any kit changes before you switch to another kit. Only the five factory kits will automatically revert back to their default settings.

You don't even have to touch the HPD-10 to play it. Just passing your hand (or stick) over the programmable infrared D-Beam, which is located at the top of the compact unit, activates and/or changes certain sounds. How cool is that?

In The Back

The HPD-10 has only a single external trigger jack for connecting external pads, kick trigger pedals, and foot switches. The Boss FS-5U footswitch (sold separately) is a great left foot switch that allows for various hi-hat functions, left foot percussion, and opening and closing (or muting) various percussion sounds. Very cool features!

If you run a stereo–to–dual mono cable (such as Roland's PCS-31L), it will allow you to connect a footswitch with one mono signal to control with your left foot, while connecting the other single mono connection to a kick trigger pedal. This emulates a traditional drumkit with a left-foot hi-hat and a right-foot bass drum setup.

This connection system also offers some excellent world percussion options. For example, when a kick pedal trigger and a Boss FS-5U are both connected directly to the EXT Trig/Foot Switch jack via the Roland PCS-31L (stereo to dual mono) cable, and the KIT is set to Tabla, the kick pedal will trigger an open finger cymbal, while the foot switch will trigger a closed finger cymbal with a very authentic tone and excellent volume sensitivity. These features open up a world of creative possibilities in combining electronic and acoustic drum and percussion combinations.

There's also a Mix In (stereo) jack that allows for connecting external audio sources (iPod, CD, or mp3 player), sepa-

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WHEN IT MATTERS, ASK FOR VIC FIRTH

rate left/right audio outputs, and a headphone jack. For recording and/or sequencing, the MIDI in/out function and 400-plus instrument sounds offer outstanding percussive sequencing versatility.

Education

Besides being a cool performance instrument, the HPD-10 is a user-friendly and versatile learning tool. It offers technically advanced Metronome and Rhythm Coach features, such as Quiet Count, Rhythm Check, Time Check, and Pad Follow. These can help you to develop strong time, build HPD-10 performance chops, and learn a wide variety of international rhythms.

Plenty Of Bang For Your Buck

With the HPD-10's user-friendly features and high-quality effects parameters (and a couple of trigger pedals added in), the sky's the limit when it comes to creating new, innovative sound ideas. The D-Beam adds a visual coolness factor to any live gig. The compact design and thoughtful placement of each trigger section on the circular rubber pad is brilliant. This is especially true in terms of the ergonomic placement of the two largest pads and the small circular center pad, which offer authentic, natural hand positioning for conga, bongo, and tabla performance.

If you're looking for state-of-the art electronic hand percussion for recording and/or live performance, this affordable, lightweight, multi-faceted percussion tool is well worth the investment. As an added bonus, the practicing and educational capabilities are the most impressive I've encountered in any electronic percussion unit.

RT-10 Series Acoustic Drum Triggers

We put the new RT-10K, RT-10S, and RT-10T Acoustic Drum Triggers to the test, using a Roland TD-12 Percussion Sound Module as the brain. Here's what we discovered.

RT-10S Snare Trigger

The snare trigger features dual head/rim sensor technology that allows for some nifty sonic options. You can trigger acoustic snare drum sounds with the head sensor and rim/cross-stick sounds with the rim sensor, or you can have the rim sensor trigger a synthesized or acoustic percussion instrument sound, while the snare sensor triggers a unique sound effect along with the natural acoustic snare. The possibilities are endless.

The RT-10S worked best when the snare head was tuned fairly tight and was dampened to reduce resonance. This tuning produced fewer sympathetic vibrations that would cause a misfire. I occasionally had to fine-tune my own physical velocity (how hard I struck the surface) in order to avoid unintentionally sending certain multi-layered, pressure-sensitive sound samples into higher-volume mode. But with the correct parameter settings on the TD-12 sound module, there was absolutely no crosstalk between the head and rim triggers of the RT-10S. Very impressive.

WITHOUT WARNING

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RT-10S dual snare trigger

RT-10T tom trigger

RT-10K kick drum trigger

RT-10T Tom Trigger

The tom trigger needed a little extra pressure applied to its adjustable sensor head (as well as some parameter adjustments on the sound module) in order to get a true dynamic range from the triggered sound. But the cool thing about the tom trigger is that I could strike only the drum's rim and still get a solid, dynamic signal from the trigger. This allowed me to access the triggered sound without involving the acoustic drumhead. This makes for a versatile addition to your triggered sound sources.

RT-10K Kick Trigger

The kick drum trigger fired most accurately on a bass drum head that featured no external muffling attachments, struck by a hard (plastic or wood) beater head. It worked fairly well when applied to an Evans EMAD batter, given the fact that the sensor head was pressed into the thick plastic tray that holds the foam muffling ring.

Up-tempo triggered double bass patterns can get sloppy and drop beats, especially if they are dynamic (accented) patterns, as opposed to straight 8th- or 16th-note patterns. I found it nearly impossible to get all the broken double bass hits to fire accurately when using the factory recommended positioning and trigger settings of the kick trigger. (Adjusting the advanced parameter settings helped a bit.)

The kick trigger comes with two thin plastic strips to be placed between the trigger and the wood hoop on both sides of the hoop. This helps to avoid pressure indentions in the hoop. But be warned: In order to keep the trigger from jarring loose, you'll need to tighten it to the point where you will experience some slight pressure indention in your wood bass drum hoop. Roland may want to experiment with a rubber-backed clamping system that applies a more balanced pressure to a larger area, instead of the current small screw-type clamp.

You'll also need to make sure that the sensor bolt is firmly tightened on the kick drum trigger. After only a couple hours of beating the bass drum, the small tension rod worked its way loose from the nut and fell to the floor.

Trigger Thoughts

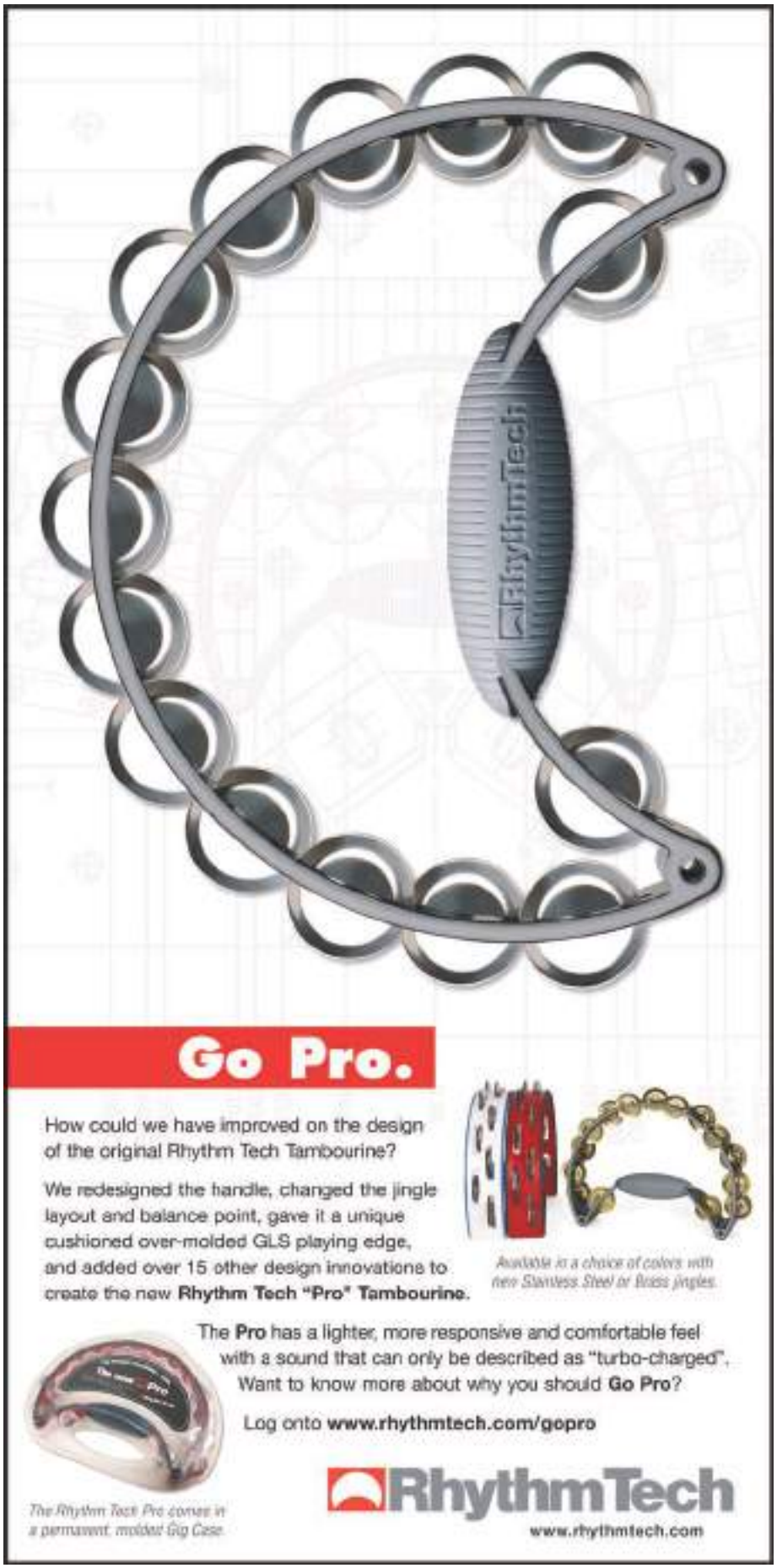
The black rectangular plastic triggers are fairly compact (2" deep x $1\frac{1}{2}$" wide) and unobtrusive. As far as tom and snare positioning is concerned, the triggers use about the same amount of space over the drum as would a typical drum mic. If you're going for a combination acoustic/electric sound, keep in mind that you'll need enough room to place a trigger *and* a mic over each drum. Remember, too, that you're going to experience more dampening and muting of your acoustic drum sound due to the pressure that the trigger head sensor places on the head. All three triggers stayed in place well when firmly clamped to the hoops of the drums.

The performance you get from Roland's new triggers (or any triggers, for that matter), will depend a great deal on how sophisticated a sound module you're triggering with them. The Roland TD-12 module we used to test the triggers offered advanced trigger parameters, coupled with a huge library of drum/percussion sounds. This allowed the RT-10 triggers to easily accommodate virtually any player, from the heavy hitter to the dynamic orchestral player.

THE NUMBERS

HPD-10 HandSonic Electronic Percussion Controller	$699
RT-10S dual snare drum trigger	$89
RT-10T tom trigger	$79
RT-10K bass drum trigger	$89

(800) 386-7575, www.rolandus.com



From Birth

Kengo Kouno Yamaha Craftsman Profile

Job Title: Bearing Edge Master Cutter Years Experience: 17 years

"Cutting the bearing edge is what gives a drum its musical voice. The right cut gives the instrument the best sound. Yamaha's saw and blade are constantly monitored to retain the tightest tolerance, and after the cut, every shell is tested on a calibrated granite surface plate. No shell leaves my station unless it is perfect. Quality is not negotiable for Yamaha Drums."

Oak Custom in York Honey Amber

Infectious

When Charley Drayton creates a groove, it is immediately considered a musical statement. His infectious beats often leave you fulfilled, yet wanting more. It's the reason why he is one of the most in-demand drummers of our day. Charley has used Yamaha Drums as his source of infection since 1979.

From Birth to Performance, from OUR hands to yours.

To Performance
Yamaha Drum Artist Profile
Chanley Drayton
Who CD Has Worked With: Fiona Apple, Michelle Branch, The Wreckers, just to name a recent few
•The harmonious charm of Oak Custom serves all musical genres.
The possibilities go as far as your imagination will take you!"
CD's new for
's original
Pink Floked SD
From CD's
original 1979 kit
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Only thirty of these $30,000 kits will be produced.

<< DW NEIL PEART COMMEMORATIVE R30 DRUMKIT

If you consider yourself the ultimate Neil Peart fan—and you happen to have $30,000 to spare—you can own your own piece of drum history. Following last year's nationwide tour of Neil Peart's drumkit (accompanied by Neil's tech, Lorne Wheaton), Guitar Center has teamed up with Drum Workshop, Sabian, and Pro-Mark to replicate Neil's R30 drumkit in honor of Rush's 30th anniversary.

Each maple-shell drum features an inner ply of curly maple, while the custom finish involves hologram appliqués of icons representing many of Rush's most famous recordings and tours. Each Black Mirra Flake panel is lined with red pinstriping, and the entire kit (including hardware and pedals) is custom-plated in 24-carat gold.

The kit also comes with a full complement of Neil's Sabian Paragon cymbals, thirty pairs of Pro-Mark Neil Peart Commemorative sticks, an exclusive DVD titled *The Making Of The R30 Drumkit*, and a certificate of authenticity signed by Neil Peart. For more information, visit **www.guitarcenter.com/peart**

<< PEARL TOM-BOURINE AND JINGLE CLAMP

Pearl Percussion's PTB10 Tom-Bourine is a 10" headed drum that can be mounted on a hi-hat or cymbal stand for a punchy tom-tom sound with the sympathetic vibrations of tambourine jingles. It comes with Pearl's exclusive QuickMount, which enables the PTB10 to be lifted for hand-held use. List price is $79.

It's a tom-tom...it's a tambourine...it's both!

Want an affordable and unobtrusive sonic addition to your drumkit? Consider Pearl Percussion's PJC10SH Jingle Clamp. When attached to snare or tom-tom rims, the three pairs of stainless-steel jingles will vibrate for an added effect each time you strike the drum. A couple turns of the tension wing bolt releases the jingles completely. The raised rubber jingle guard is designed for striking directly on the Jingle Clamp for an added percussion effect. List price is $24.

(615) 833-4477, www.pearldrum.com

<< PRO-MARK PEART PACKAGES

Pro-Mark Neil Peart drumstick packages commemorate six of Rush's tours over the past thirty years. Each package contains stickers with images from Neil's 30th Anniversary drumset, as well as a numbered ticket corresponding to a series of winning numbers at www.promark.com/neil. Matching numbers will receive one of the following: Neil's new book, *Roadshow*, a Rush 30th Anniversary DVD, a Rush 30th Anniversary Tour Book, Neil's *Anatomy Of A Drum Solo* DVD, or free Pro-Mark merchandise. Authentic R30 backstage passes will be inserted into random packages. The collectible packages are available in limited quantity at $59.95.

(877) PRO-MARK, www.promark.com

Mirage drums feature Tama's first acrylic shells in thirty years.

<< TAMA STARCLASSIC MIRAGE

Tama's new Starclassic Mirage drumkits feature 7 mm–thick acrylic shells. The shells are made and edged in the US, and they're available in clear Crystal Ice and transparent charcoal Black Ice (below) versions. Kits include die-cast hoops, Tama's Star-Cast mounting system, and Iron Cobra pedals. A five-piece configuration with a 20x22 bass drum, 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms, a 12x14 floor tom, and a 6x14 snare drum lists for $4,499.99 (including stands). Configurations without hardware and/or a snare drum are also available.

(215) 638-8670, www.tama.com

<< KORG BEATLAB DIGITAL METRONOME

Korg's BeatLab (BTL-1) Digital Metronome contains tools that make it easy for drummers and percussionists to practice a variety of rhythms and styles. Features include a training function with thirty-nine standard patterns for practicing snare drum rudiments, sound and LED cue indicators that help users perfect the timing of right- and left-hand strokes, selectable rhythms from quarter notes through 16th notes (plus triplets), and program mode for building simple or complex user-defined practice patterns, programmable presets for tempo, beat, and each rhythm sound's volume.

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The Reference Shelf

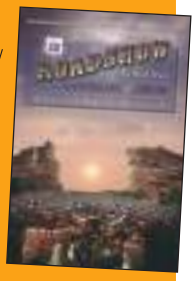
Creative Coordination (DVD)

by Thomas Lang (Hudson Music)

Thomas Lang's *Creative Coordination* DVD showcases the master drummer's technique, independence, and musicianship. The three-disc, seven-hour tutorial features Lang on acoustic and electronic drums, demonstrating his approach to 21st-century drumming, with particular emphasis on foot technique and coordination. Lang then lays out a method for working from slow, basic exercises to fast, complex, and challenging patterns in a step-by-step manner. Special features include an audio-commentary track during instruction and performances, a director's narration track, bonus sections on posture, seat height, balance, and stick grip, and printable PDF transcriptions. The deluxe digi-pak includes a full-color poster and carries a suggested list price of $49.95.
(888) 796-2992, www.hudsonmusic.com

Roadshow: Landscape With Drums: A Concert Tour By Motorcycle

by Neil Peart (Rounder Books)



This new book from Rush drummer Neil Peart relates "the biggest journey of all in my restless existence: the life of a touring musician." Traveling by motorcycle, riding 21,000 miles of back roads and highways in North America and Europe, Peart takes the reader on a journey in search of the perfect show, the perfect meal, the perfect road, and an elusive inner satisfaction that comes only with the recognition that the journey itself is the ultimate destination. List price is $27.95.
www.neilpeart.net

Block Rockin' Beats

by Dawn Richardson (Mel Bay)

This book, by author, teacher, and former 4 Non Blondes drummer Dawn Richardson, began as a sequel to Richardson's beginning rock drumming book, *Building Blocks Of Rock*, but ended up as its own entity. It's written with the intermediate player in mind, with grooves and fills to tackle after the basics have been mastered. The book also covers styles beyond basic rock. List price is $14.95.
(800) 863-5229, www.melbay.com

<< PAGE DRUMS

Page drums feature a cable-tension design created by veteran drummer David Page. Nothing is drilled into a Page shell except the necessary sound hole and small holes for the snare throw-offs. Lugs hang freely from the tension rods. This eliminates buzzing and rattling while providing for maximum drum resonance.

A precisely measured cable fits around the lugs of each drum to create the tuning system. Once tightened, the drum can be tuned with one attached key. Page drums also feature new custom tom mounts, floor-tom leg mounts, and suspended bass drum mounts.
(619) 299-3266, www.pagedrums.com

<< SLEISHMAN DRUMS

The Sleishman Drum Company of Sydney, Australia offers Total Resonance System (T.R.S.) drums. The system, developed by inventor/drummer Don Sleishman, frees the drumshell of all bolts and fittings. The only contact made with the shell is by the heads themselves.

The T.R.S. receives tension from both top and bottom heads by sitting just off the shell. This allows the drum to resonate to its maximum potential, and facilitates a wide tuning range. Both drumheads work together to form a constant "sweet spot" at any tension.

Sleishman drums are custom-made from a variety of wood types. These include birch, Canadian rock maple, African padouk, and indigenous Australian species like jarrah, brush box, and blackwood.
www.sleishman.com

The Reference Shelf

Understanding Groove For Drumset (Book, CD, DVD package)

by Nucleo Vega (Mel Bay)

This book offers a thorough analysis of the groove concept in percussion accompaniment, with a focus on bridging the gap between physical and auditory awareness. The author challenges the idea that "groove is only felt and cannot be taught" using an original syllabic and groove analysis system. List price is $24.95.

(800) 863-5229, www.melbay.com

Modern Rock Drum Play-Along (Book/CD package)

(Hal Leonard)

This latest installment in Hal Leonard's *Drum Play-Along* series offers eight contemporary titles with "sound-alike" (not the original) tracks, played with and without the drums. Clear transcriptions for each track are provided. Titles include "Chop Suey" (System Of A Down), "Duality" (Slipknot), "Nookie" (Limp Bizkit), and "Whatever" (Godsmack). List price is $12.95.

www.musicdispatch.com

No Reading Required: Easy Rock Drum Beats (DVD)

by Stan Mitchell (Alfred Publishing)

This DVD offers a "learn by watching and listening" approach, as opposed to standard musical notation and theory. The content includes lessons on posture, breathing, and holding the sticks, along with systems of sticking, vocalizing, and counting. Lessons cover triplets, swing rhythms, articulation, and dynamics. List price not available at press time.

www.alfred.com

Lessons From A Legend: Simon Kirke (DVD)

by Simon Kirke (Rockstarz/Hal Leonard)

Bad Company drummer Simon Kirke teaches the viewer how to play five of the band's hits, along with the Free classic "All Right Now." Simon analyzes each song and its beat, and demonstrates his famous fills. Bonus material includes live concert footage and an interview with Simon detailing his musical approach. List price is $39.95.

www.rockstarz.com, www.musicdispatch.com

Set Up And Play! (DVD)

by Steve Fidyk (Mel Bay)

The author of *The Drum Set Smart Book* offers a step-by-step tutorial on how to set up a new drumkit, from unpacking the boxes to adjusting for play and tuning each drum. Steve goes on to demonstrate fundamental drumming exercises, then puts things all together in an actual recording session. List price is $14.95.

(800) 863-5229, www.melbay.com

Producing Hit Records: Secrets From The Studio

by David John Farinella (Schirmer Trade Books)

Modern Drummer contributor Farinella has interviewed over forty-five top producers, artists, and musicians to get the story on what goes into producing today's recorded hits. He explores the chemistry between artist and producer, and presents extensive practical tips for anyone wanting to produce. List price is $17.95.

www.musicsales.com

<< AND WHAT'S MORE >>

PSYCHO CITY DRUMS is a Detroit-based company specializing in handcrafted drums and kits. Company founder (and drummer) Tony Sieracki's goal is to offer kits with everything a drummer could want, from the most demanding pro to the weekend warrior. P.C.D. personally communicates with its customers to size up the shells, select hardware, and choose a custom finish. Aquarian heads are standard on P.C.D. drums. An accompanying Psycho City cymbal line (made by Masterwork Cymbals) will shortly be introduced.

(586) 899-4081, www.psychocitydrums.com

NADY SYSTEMS' HM-10 mini headworn condenser microphone is an omni-directional electret condenser mic that offers clean, transparent audio, enhanced vocal pickup, and improved gain before feedback. It features an ergonomic design for a comfortable fit with or without eyeglasses, hats, or headphones, and its durable thin metal frame can be easily molded to any user. The HM-10 is available in black or beige, with a Mini-XLR or 3.5-mm phone plug for wired and wireless use.

(510) 652-2411, www.nadywireless.com

SLUG PERCUSSION PRODUCTS, in conjunction with Soulfly's Joe Nunez, has developed a universal vented impact pad that will work on toms, snare drums, and bass drums. The Slug Uni-Badge incorporates Slug's patented vented impact pad technology and mounts on top of or underneath drumheads. It also glows in the dark so that users can keep some visual perspective on their drums during elaborate lighting and stage effects.

www.slugdrums.com

The **HYPER-BASS** electronic drum pedal is claimed to allow drummers to achieve bass drum speeds twice those that traditional pedals allow. The pedal triggers once when stepped on, and again on the upswing, resulting in two beats per push instead of one. The Hyper-Bass is currently available directly from the manufacturer for $174.99.

www.hyper-bass.com

STANLEY IMAGE AND SOUND PRODUCTION offers a collection of photos of drums and other percussion details called Stanley Drum Art. The pictures are ready to decorate recording studios, rehearsal spaces, or homes. The artwork comes in a black aluminum frame and glass to match the widescreen artwork. There are now nine different pictures, and the collection is growing. One large format is currently available; smaller formats will be offered in the future. Pictures can be ordered directly from **www.StanleyISP.com**

The Who's Zak Starkey

Channeling Keith—And More

"I am not a rock 'n' roll star," insists Zak Starkey. "I'm not famous, I suppose. But I *am* a very successful musician." Deadpan, funny, and self-deprecating, as this quote shows, Zak Starkey is famous by both association and skill set. But his famous name is trumped by his superb drumming.

As the forty-year-old son of Ringo Starr, most would think that Zak Starkey had been handed stardom on a silver platter. He plays drums with two of the most popular bands in the world, names the late, great Keith Moon as one of his best childhood *friends*, and is so busy he can be impossible to reach, as when *Modern Drummer* tried in vain to contact the globetrotting musician after he'd left his cell phone on someone else's private jet.

But before he landed gigs with The Who and Oasis, Zak Starkey played with ten years' worth of unknowns and also-rans, dragging his kit all over England like any other ambitious drummer. Slogging away in the studio and on the road, Starkey honored his small-time obligations like anyone else, until just over ten years ago, when late, legendary Who bassist John Entwistle heard him at a local pub and immediately invited him to join his band.

Not surprisingly, Zak's drumming is the best fit in The Who since Keith Moon pillaged and pounded the skins during the band's '60s/'70s glory days. On *The Who Live: The Blues To The Bush* CD and *The Who Live At The Royal Albert Hall* DVD, Starkey integrates within The Who as no one has done since the mad "Moon the loon" himself.

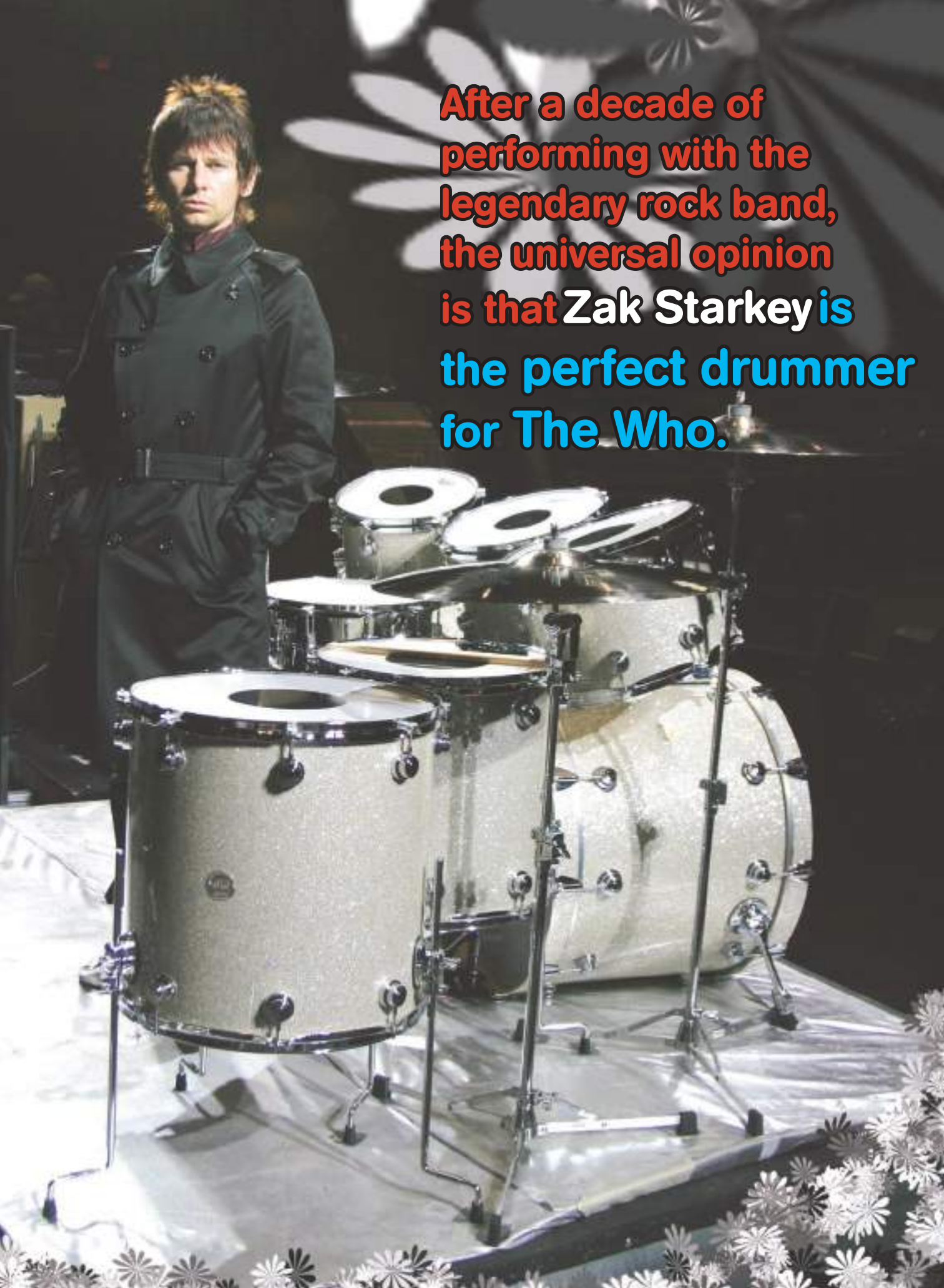
The other drummers who followed Moon in that exalted drum chair—great players indeed—displayed a keen knowledge of Keith's kinetic drum fills and expansive time feel. But Zak's combination of organic cohesion and natural fluidity is closer to Moon's than anyone. Indeed, Pete Townshend himself has called Zak "the karmic Keith Moon."

More than chops or technique, Zak brings a dynamic sense of grand flash and fortitude balanced with a massive groove and an absolutely swinging fill conception. His seemingly innate ability to improvise with Townshend and Entwistle (now replaced by Pino Palladino) recalls Moon on such Who classics as "The Real Me." And his roaring full-set fills on "Pinball Wizard," "Won't Get Fooled Again," "Baba O'Riley," and the whole of *Quadrophenia* are nearly perfect and always inspiring.

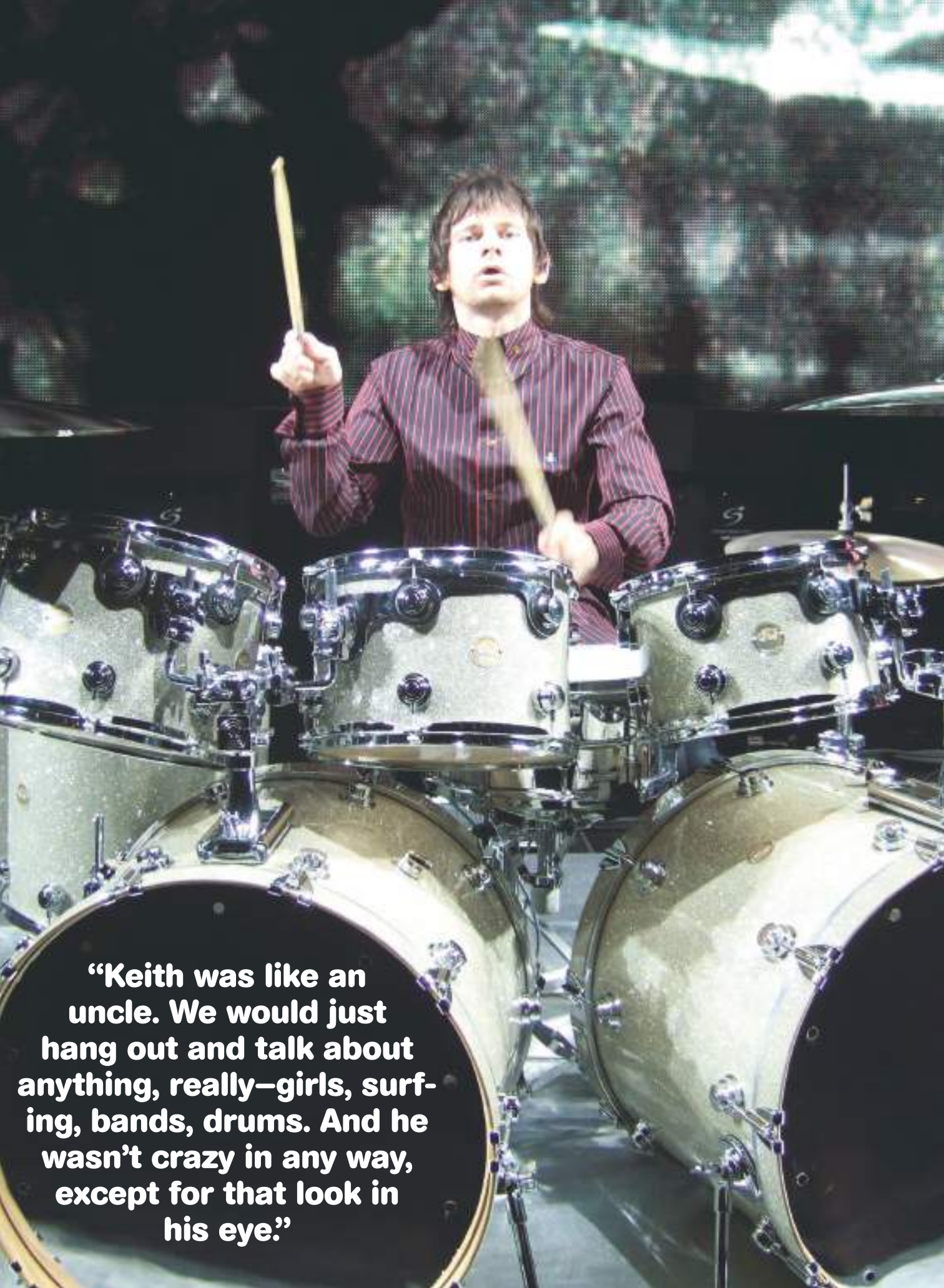
Is this Starkey simply a basher? On Oasis's most recent album, *Don't Believe The Truth*, he's consummately tasteful, playing big-beat, tribal-folk rhythms rather than simple 2 and 4, complementing the band's Beatle-ish melodies with thinking man's grooves. Starkey matches this feat with alternate patterns of thought on such albums as John Entwistle's *The Rock*, Johnny Marr & The Healers' *Boomslang*, and Steve Marriott's *One More Time For The Old Tosser*, as well as his touring work with Ringo's All-Starr Bands. Like his dad, Zak can adjust to fit every gig, always playing with the right feel and a touch of his dad's creative wit.

Currently on tour with The Who in support of their new album, *The Endless Wire*, Starkey continues to listen to his favorite old blues and rock 'n' roll records, play guitar, and practice the rudiments while writing music for his own glam band, Penguins. Bridging the past with the present, Zak Starkey is a drummer, an artist, a wizard—and a true star.

Story by Ken Micallef • Photos by Mick Rock



After a decade of performing with the legendary rock band, the universal opinion is that Zak Starkey is the perfect drummer for The Who.



“Keith was like an uncle. We would just hang out and talk about anything, really–girls, surfing, bands, drums. And he wasn’t crazy in any way, except for that look in his eye.”

MD: Do you ever get tired of being referred to as "Ringo Starr's son"?

Zak: It doesn't get tiring. I kind of rebelled against it when I was a teenager; I said some pretty stupid things. But I'll be honest, it's great being Ringo's son. He's the greatest living drummer as far as I'm concerned.

MD: I read that he gave you your first drumkit.

Zak: Yes, a 1962 Ludwig four-piece champagne sparkle kit that he gave me for my eleventh birthday. I still have it; it's set up in the next room, actually.

MD: He also gave you one single drum lesson. What did he teach you?

Zak: It was comprised of 8ths on the hi-hat, kick on 1 and 3, and snare drum on 2 and 4. That was it. We were hanging out in the studio one day and he said, "So, should I show you how to play the drums?" I said, "Yeah, of course." So he showed me that pattern. The next day he showed me how to add an additional 8th note on the bass drum: dunk-kat, dunk-dunk kat. I said, "Well, I can do that already, Dad." And he said, "So you're on your own."

Classic Rock Begets Classic Rocker

MD: Did most of your early drumming chops come from playing along to Who records?

Zak: Keith Moon was my first big influence, definitely. I wanted to play the drums because of Keith. When I was very young there was music all around me in my parents' house. You would go into the living room and find stacks and stacks of LPs. I would spend my days listening to records. My dad took me to see T. Rex when I was six. That was *it* for me; I wanted to be Marc Bolan. Then I got into David Bowie.

Zak's Kit

Drums: DW in Broken-Glass finish with chrome hardware

- **A.** 6½x14 Edge snare
- **B.** 8x12 rack tom
- **C.** 9x13 rack tom
- **D.** 10x14 rack tom
- **E.** 16x16 floor tom
- **F.** 16x18 floor tom
- **G.** 18x24 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

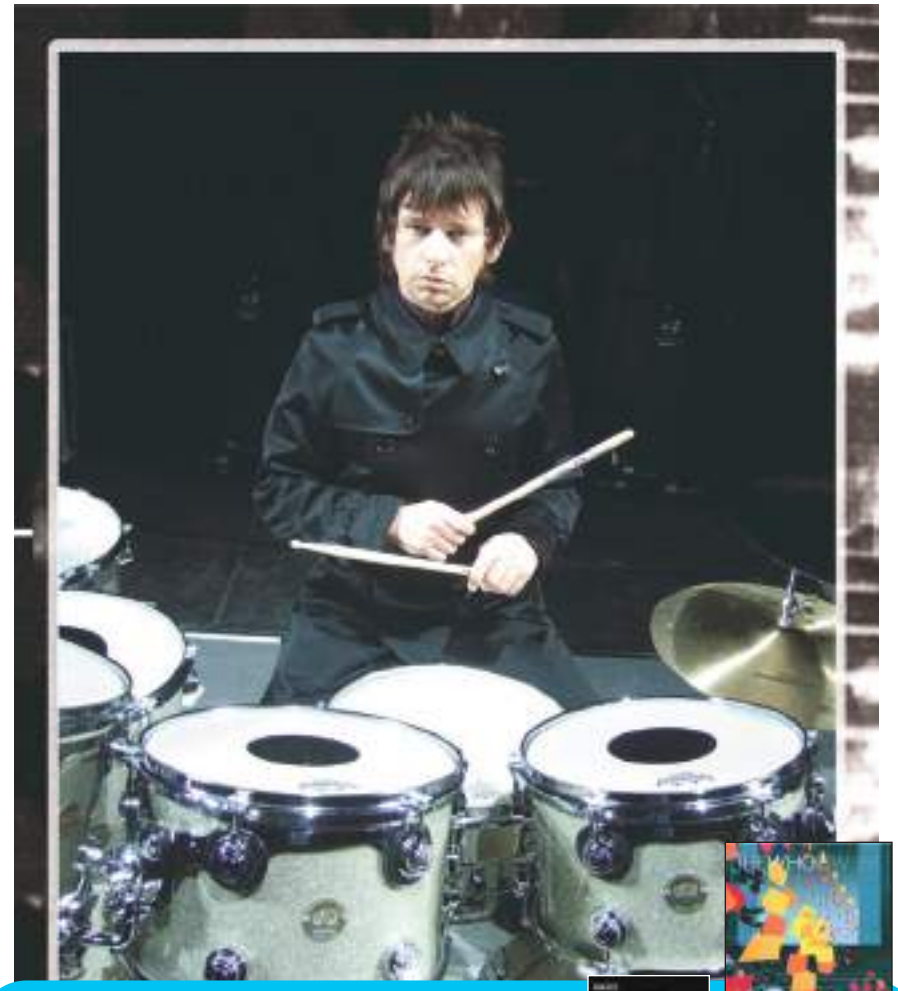
1. 14" A Mastersound hi-hats
2. 21" K brilliant crash prototype
3. 21" K brilliant crash prototype
4. 22" K medium brilliant crash/ride

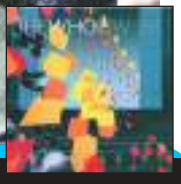
Hardware: all DW, including two 5000AD3 kick pedals

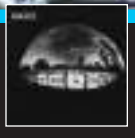
Heads: Remo coated Ambassadors on snare, C.S. (black dot) on toms and bass drums

Sticks: Zildjian 5A Natural wood model

Electronics: Tama Rhythm Watch, Ultimate Ears in-ear monitors, AuraSound bass shaker (attached to throne to feel low end)







ZAK'S STACKS

Artist	Album
Johnny Marr & The Healers	Boomslang
Oasis	Don't Believe The Truth
The Who	Live At The Royal Albert Hall (DVD)
The Who	Tommy And Quadrophenia: Live (DVD)
John Entwistle	The Rock
Lightning Seeds	Tilt
The Who	The Who Live: The Blues To The Bush 1999
The Who	The Endless Wire

CLASSIC ROCKER FILES

Artist	Album	Drummer
The Who	Meaty Beaty Big And Bouncy	Keith Moon
The Who	Odds & Sods	Keith Moon
The Who	Who's Next	Keith Moon
The Who	Tommy	Keith Moon
The Small Faces	Ogden's Nut Gone Flake	Kenney Jones
Harry Nilsson	Nilsson Schmilsson	Jim Gordon, Jim Keltner, Roger Pope
Harry Nilsson	Son Of Schmilsson	Jim Gordon, Ringo Starr, Jim Keltner, Roger Pope, Barry Morgan
T. Rex	Electric Warrior	Bill Legend
T. Rex	The Slider	Bill Legend
The Beatles	Abbey Road	Ringo Starr
Derek & The Dominos	Layla	Jim Gordon
The Damned	Damned Damned Damned	Rat Scabies (Chris Millar)
The Sex Pistols	Never Mind The Bollocks	Paul Cook
The Clash	Give 'Em Enough Rope	Topper Headon
Ian Dury	New Boots And Panties!	Charlie Charles
The Ruts	The Crack	Dave Ruffy
Al Green	Gets Next To You	Al Jackson

I loved all of those '70s glam bands from England, like Slade and Sweet. Then when I was eight, I discovered The Who's *Meaty Beaty Big And Bouncy*. That turned everything on its head. It was so different and it sounded so alive. It *was* bouncy.

MD: So did you start playing along with that record?

Zak: I wasn't playing drums yet. I had just gotten into The Who at that point. Then a year later I started playing with a lot of records. The Who, The Small Faces' *Ogdens Nut Gone Flake*, Harry Nilsson records with Jim Gordon on drums—he's a big influence for me. Gordon is a funky monster. He was so on it. I love that double snare hit thing he does with his left hand going back into the 1 of the bar.

"Jump Into The Fire" by Harry Nilsson is a great Gordon track. I played a lot to *Nilsson Schmilsson* and *Son Of Schmilsson*. And I know my dad is on a lot of *Son Of Schmilsson*. I played along to T. Rex's *Electric Warrior* and *The Slider*, all of the Bowie albums, *Abbey Road*, and Derek & The Dominos' *Layla*. I wasn't really copying the drums, if you know what I mean. I was playing along but it was more about getting the vibe of the album.

MD: What did you learn from doing that rather than copying the drum beats verbatim?

Zak: I learned how to play music and develop a musical empathy. I'm a real melting pot of styles. Right around that same time punk started up and I just got completely into it. I loved the first Damned album, *Damned Damned Damned*, as well as the Sex Pistols' *Never Mind The Bollocks*. That was the most amazing thing I'd ever heard. *Give 'Em Enough Rope* by The Clash, too. And Ian Dury's *New Boots And Panties!* I was also into a British band called The Ruts, with a fantastic drummer, Dave Ruffy. I really liked their album, *The Crack*.

Rudiments Make The Man

MD: Did you ever practice purely drums?

Zak: To be honest, I only played to records. I didn't just play drums. But from the time I was twelve I was always in a band. We used to play almost every night in my mum's dining room—drove her out of her mind!

MD: You never felt the need to find a teacher and learn the rudiments?

Zak: I didn't know any rudiments until I met the drummer with Kasabian, Ian

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Matthews. He's the best drummer I've ever seen. Live, you know that he has chops, but he's like Bonham in that he doesn't display everything on every song. Then you hear him at soundcheck and he plays like Buddy Rich. Stunning. Their album, *Empire*, is number-1 in the UK. I was hanging out with him this weekend, and he showed me a few things, and I swear it improved my playing at least twenty percent. I don't know what they're called: I think they're different paradiddle variations and some other rudiments. I began practicing them and it's turning my playing around.

MD: On *The Who Live At The Royal Albert Hall* DVD you sound great, though your grip is unusual. But you are incredibly loose. And your singles are burning.

Zak: At that point I could only do singles. Now I'm working on doubles, and that helps everything else. As far as a practice routine, I use the rudiments that Ian showed me as a warm-up exercise, and when a gig is coming up, I work on the music. Ian really helped me with my left-hand grip.

MD: How did you develop your singles without being a rudimental drummer?

Zak: I just used to play *a lot*. As I said, I always played in bands. There was never a time when I wasn't in one. And I would play along with records. So I guess everybody else had a head start on me.

MD: But having Ringo Starr as a dad and Keith Moon as a friend gave you a certain advantage.

Zak: Oh, definitely. My dad was a big influence at first, and that was soon eclipsed by Keith, Rat Scabies, Paul Cook, and Topper Headon.

Zak's Uncle Ernie

MD: Speaking of Keith Moon, as a child, you were good friends with him. Did you and Keith talk drums?

Zak: Keith was like an uncle, really. He was one of my dad's best friends. When my brother, sister, and I used to stay with my dad there, we would occasionally spend a few days at Keith's house. Keith was the babysitter. We would just hang out and talk about anything, really—girls, surfing, bands, drums. He was a really fantastic guy to hang out with. He wasn't crazy in any way, except for that look in his eye. I was hanging out with my hero.

MD: Once you started playing drums, did he give you advice?

Zak: I never actually sat at a set of drums with Keith. We used to talk about the drums. I asked him how he played the ride cymbal part in "Glow Girl" from *Odds & Sods*. It's an incredibly fast ride cymbal. He said what he did was put up one cymbal and a piece of cork where the wing nut would go, then another cymbal on top of that, but upside down. And he played between the two. That's the only advice he gave me, and I think he may have lied. The recording sounds like an overdub to me.

MD: Did he tell you anything that you were able to use later when you played with The Who?

Zak: I don't think so. When I first played with The Who we did *Quadrophenia*. There were certain things that had to be in there, certain fills that had to be exactly the same because they are so *Quadrophenia*, if you know what I mean. They are memorable fills. There aren't memorable parts, though, because everything Keith played kept changing. If you listen to "The Real Me," you're not quite playing the same thing every time, ever. Every bar comes around again, but what he played was

never the exact same thing.

It was such a big band for the tour we did for *Quadrophenia*. There was Pete Townshend, two other guitar players, Roger Daltrey, two keyboard players, a brass section, backup singers—a huge thing. I tried to condense the drumming into something that everyone could get their heads around. I tried to make it a little bit straighter and more direct and powerful. It's nowhere as good as the original. But I wanted to do something cohesive for everybody in the band so they'd be able to hold on and know what was happening.

MD: I heard that Keith Moon gave you a drumset when you were twelve.

Zak: Yes, the famous white and gold Premier kit. That set was sold by Sothebys [for 12,000 English pounds].

MD: Can you describe that set?

Zak: It was a double bass drumkit with eleven toms. I was twelve then and we lived in a village called Winkfield, Berkshire. The big Premier set was very safe. It was like having a wall all around you. No one could see me, but everyone could hear me—including our neighbors, who were trying to stop me from playing drums. I could reach all the drums, and within a year I was playing gigs with that kit. Our band was called The Next, and we did original material—a rock 'n' roll band with a punk influence.

MD: How did you lug that kit around?

Zak: I would just throw them in the back of a truck with no cases. The kit was pretty messed up when I got it.

MD: How do you absorb all the information in a Keith Moon drum part yet still express something of yourself?

Zak: I really knew the songs from playing along to the records over and over when I was a kid. I understood the shape of the songs. But when I started playing with The Who, I listened to the parts again and tried to simplify and make them more direct and easier for a fifteen-piece band to follow.

MD: You grew up playing with the records, and you new Keith Moon, but what did you learn by playing the songs with The Who live that wasn't apparent from playing along with the records?

Zak: It's never the same two nights running—ever. Not so much with the *Quadrophenia* tour, because that was such a big band and we had narration, actors, and film accompaniment. That was like rock 'n' roll theater taken on the road. It worked well. But when we went back to a five-piece—Pete, John, Roger, Rabbit [keyboard player John Bundrick], and me—I suddenly found out that it's different every night.

MD: How so?

Zak: As soon as you get to the solo, we're off. Wherever Pete goes, we have to go. It's very free. Pete's approach is about *playing* music, and you have to feel wherever it wants to go. If we did it the same way every night, it would be boring. For example, in "Won't Get Fooled Again," Pete plays the guitar in the verses differently every night. You have to jump on that. Even in the verses he'll change the rhythm part every single night to whatever he feels like playing. He does that in "Can't Explain," "Substitute," and everything. I can't take my eyes off him. If you mess up, he'll think he's won.

MD: It seems like crash-riding is one essential of drumming with The Who.

Zak: Yes, and you have to be able to go [sings a one-bar, 16th-note phrase with an upward tilt at the end]. Everyone in The

Who does it. Pete does it on guitar, John used to do it on bass, and I do it on the snare and kick, which is why I have two kicks. I don't play the kicks in the traditional heavy rock manner. I like groupings, like repeated 16ths played right foot, snare drum, left foot. I'll use that in a four-bar phrase or beat.

MD: It's funny that with all the classic fills and instrumental parts of The Who, a simple rhythmic phrase would be so important.

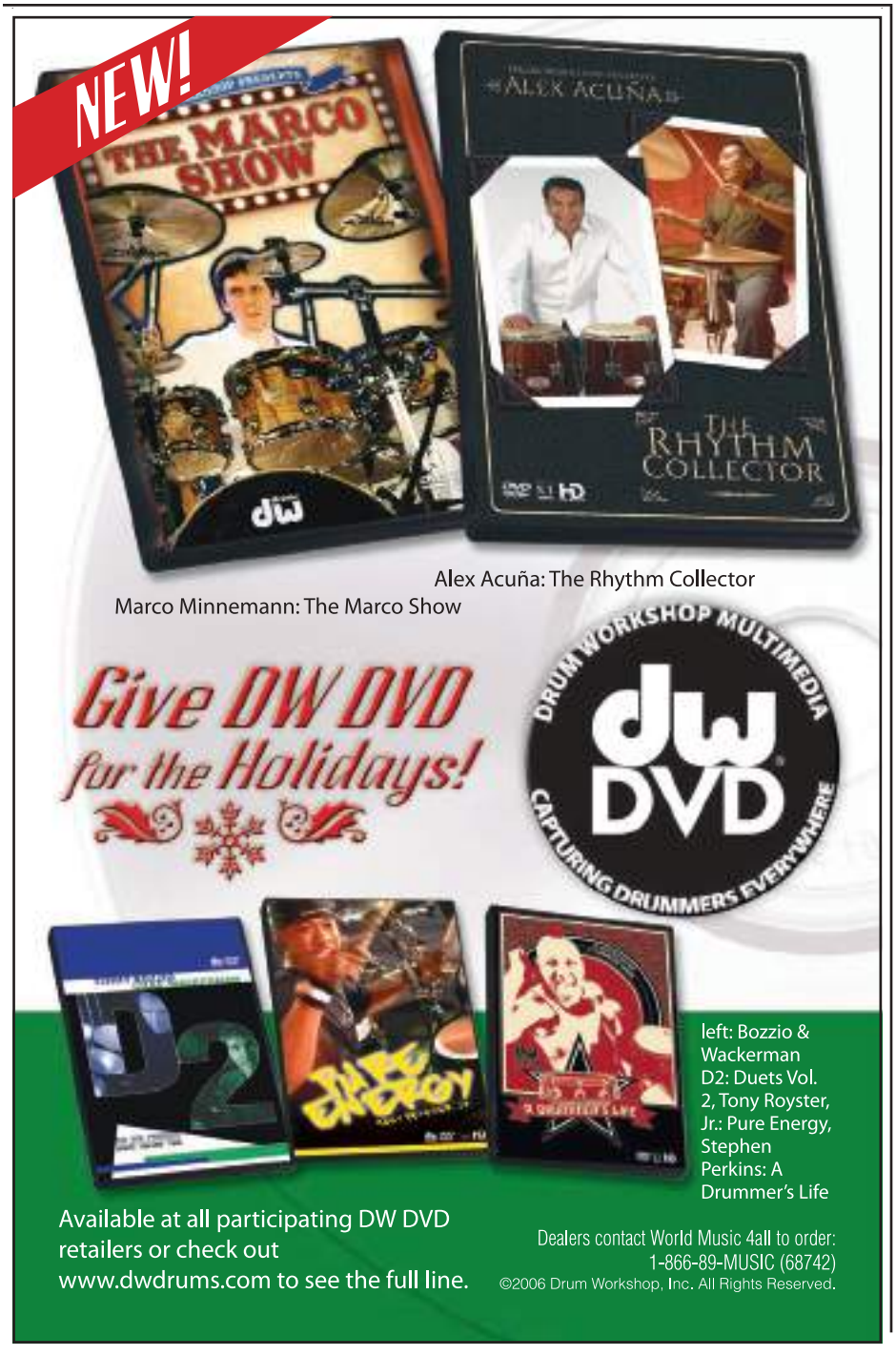
Zak: Keith did that as well, and I stole it from him. I stole the crash-ride thing from Keith, too. But Kenney Jones was also doing that in the '60s, and if they weren't doing it then the compression made it *sound* like they were. The limiting affected the cymbals that way.

MD: You just mentioned Kenney Jones, another of your predecessors in The Who. What about Simon Phillips? Would you say your groove is more laid back than his?

Zak: I would think so. Nobody is as on the money as Simon is. But he has a very different background from mine. I never really got into fusion and that kind of Billy Cobham era. I was into punk. Towards the end of punk, my friends got into Billy Cobham's *Spectrum,* but I just didn't dig it. I was into Jimi Hendrix.

MD: How did you develop your laid-back groove?

Zak: I never thought about it. My dad was laid-back, but his things kind of popped out. He was very awake in the way that he played. You listen to The Beatles records and he's on top of it much of the time. He's really grooving, but it's also *alive*. I never really asked him about specific Beatles parts, though.



Bonding With Boris The Spider

MD: How did playing with John Entwistle first prepare you for The Who?

Zak: It was great to have an ally in the band. John was a really good friend. We first played together when I was sixteen, and it just worked and sounded good. Then I played in his band when I was nineteen to twenty-one. Over the years, we occasionally played together, and we did a big charity AIDs show at Wembley Stadium in '87. And we played on Roger Daltrey's solo tour. John and I hung out a lot. As for the music, it was great playing with John, really easy. But he always said I should start my fills earlier.

MD: Earlier in the bar?

Zak: Earlier in an earlier bar!

MD: He was such a monstrous technician and so melodic. Becoming comfortable with him must have made for an easier fit when you joined Pete and Roger.

Zak: It sure did. It made it much easier.

MD: Can you contrast the difference in pockets between Pino Palladino and John Entwistle?

Zak: I don't think Pino would mind my saying that he has spent his whole life trying to play the least common denominator, and now in The Who he has to play as much as he can. But he loves it. I couldn't think of another gig where it's so free.

When The Who rehearse, we might play only two tunes. We play them and go home. We'll be there for an afternoon, but we might only play for thirty minutes. The Who really don't like to rehearse, and John hated it. John loved to *play*. He would get up in any club or bar and sit in.

When I did *The Rock* with John in '86, we were living at his house. It took a year

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to make that record, because there were lineup changes. But every night we would have dinner at 6:30. Then John would go up to his room and practice the bass for an hour. He did that every day.

MD: As someone with extensive experience playing with him, what made John Entwistle great?

Zak: He had an amazing, deep pocket, and then he'd play fills that would blow your mind. And he could jump on anything you played. He could read everyone like a book.

MD: Everyone says that when you play with better musicians, they lift you up. Did playing with Entwistle improve your sense of time?

Zak: That's happened to me my entire life. I've been lucky to play with some really great musicians. I played with Joe Walsh for a while in '92. I double-drummed on that tour with Joe Vitale. We would do a lot of the drumming together. On some tunes I would play drums when Vitale would play keyboards and flute. On others I would play guitar and Vitale would play drums. I learned a lot from those guys.

MD: You also played and recorded with bands that are virtually unknown. You have certainly paid your dues.

Zak: I never turned down anything. As a working musician, you can't.

Whose Gear Are You?

MD: With The Who, you play what I think of as large crashes. Why do you prefer those?

Zak: They just feel and sound better to me. You have to hit them differently each time to get what you want out of them—softer or harder. But for the music that I play and the way I play, large crashes work better than sharp, fast crashes.

MD: Do you use the same complement with Oasis?

Zak: Yeah. Those cymbals make a lot of noise, man. They just fit. But you have to pick your moments with them, too, because they do make such a big sound. It's not just crash-crash-crash all night. And the brilliant finish gives them a bit more life.

MD: I understand you really like Zildjian's Mastersound hi-hats.

Zak: They have a wavy bottom cymbal that lets the air out. They sound great to me—more of a *shoooosh*. I never play them really tightly shut. I keep them loose. In fact, the nut isn't very tight. I like a lot of movement with the hi-hats. They play better that way.

MD: Do you play a lot of 2 and 4 or 8th notes on the hi-hat with your left foot when riding the cymbal?

Zak: Sometimes. Sometimes I play fours. But the Mastersounds give me a stronger chick sound that really cuts through.

The Who vs. Oasis vs. Penguins

MD: Was there an audition when you joined The Who in 1996?

Zak: No. And Pete has never said anything to me about my drumming in ten years.

MD: You played on the forthcoming Who album, *The Endless Wire*. Can you describe recording with The Who?

Zak: Pete played everything—including drums—on the demos. He's a very good drummer. He had some pretty set ideas about what he wanted. I got the tracks while I was on tour with Oasis. I was due to come back and begin recording the album, and then extra shows were added in Brazil. So I couldn't make all of the sessions for *The Endless Wire*.

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Zak Starkey

I eventually worked on five tunes, but only one of them made the record. I'm on "Black Widow Eyes." I'm not on the mini opera, which is a part of the album. We were playing the mini opera live for the first three shows on the last tour. It's basically a story told in seven songs, but it's not like *Tommy,* where all of the songs are four minutes long. Some of the songs are under two minutes.

MD: Is this like classic Who: power chords, dramatic flourishes, and teen angst?

Zak: Some of it is pretty aggressive, but then some of it is more in the vein of *The Who By Numbers*.

MD: How does recording with The Who differ from recording with Oasis?

Zak: When recording with Oasis, generally we play like a band: together. Recording with The Who, it's literally me and Pete. I was cutting to his demo.

MD: How does your setup change for Oasis?

Zak: With Oasis I use a small kit, with a single 24" bass drum, 10x14 and 16x18 toms, and the same cymbals.

MD: Do you tune differently?

Zak: The same. The thing with Oasis is that every member of the group is a singer, guitarist, producer, and drummer, so they have a pretty good idea of how they want to hear their song. But they can't quite play it. So Liam will mime the part he wants as we're playing. They know what they want, but I do have the freedom to stretch it out a little. Whoever's song it is, he's in charge of it, along with the record producer.

MD: That must be a headache, four guys telling you what to play.

Zak: Oh man, it's such a weight off my shoulders. I'm not scratching around so much with them, looking for a part. They'll say, "Try some Motown fours," or "Play it like an Elvis record from the '50s." Those guys are the most dedicated musicians I've ever met. Oasis are everything you think they're going to be, everything you think they're not going to be, and more.

MD: You play what sound like folk or tribal rhythms on Oasis's latest record, *Don't Believe The Truth*. The rhythms are more circular than 2 and 4.

Zak: There are a lot of fours on the snare drum. They'd been listening to a lot of Bob Dylan, like when Bob went electric on *Highway 61 Revisited*. They were also listening to a lot of Kinks and Who. They were trying to simplify and make it more direct. It really worked.

MD: How does Oasis bring out a different side of your personality than The Who?

Zak: I would say it's not any easier playing with Oasis. It's not as flashy, you might say, but it does require more discipline. If I play something too fast with Oasis, every guy on that stage knows it. In The Who, Pete doesn't even count in "My Generation." He just starts and we all jump in. The Who want it different every night. So the two bands seem like extreme opposites, but there's a lot of control required for both.

MD: How has working with Oasis influenced the music of your own band, Penguins? They're both pop-oriented.

Zak: We're more glam than Oasis, but we're not too keen on being influenced by anything. That said, I listen to a lot of blues, like Muddy Waters, Little Walter, Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee, Lightnin' Hopkins, plus a lot of rock 'n' roll, Little Richard.... I don't listen to much new music, though. I like Aphex Twin quite a bit. But the Penguins, we're just playing what we feel. The band's lineup is just me and a female singer called Sshh. She's from Sydney. We're just making music at the moment and posting it on MySpace [myspace.com/88761904]. We're not looking for a record deal yet. It's just great to be able to record our own stuff on my Pro Tools setup at home.

MD: It's interesting that you're a blues lover.

Zak: I find the music to be really honest. It's the same with a lot of rock 'n' roll, like Jerry Lee Lewis. That honesty, to me, is so inspiring. I listen to it and walk away buzzing. It's alive.

MD: You really cue off the vibe of the music, in the same way you learned those early Who drum parts.

Zak: Exactly. And those blues players are really sharp as well.

MD: Is there a place you want to get to as a drummer?

Zak: I don't know, man. I'm just rolling along. But meeting Ian Matthews has made me realize that you never stop learning. You can always improve. You're never as good as you think you are. And you absolutely can't rest on your laurels.

To hear some of Zak Starkeys' tracks, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.

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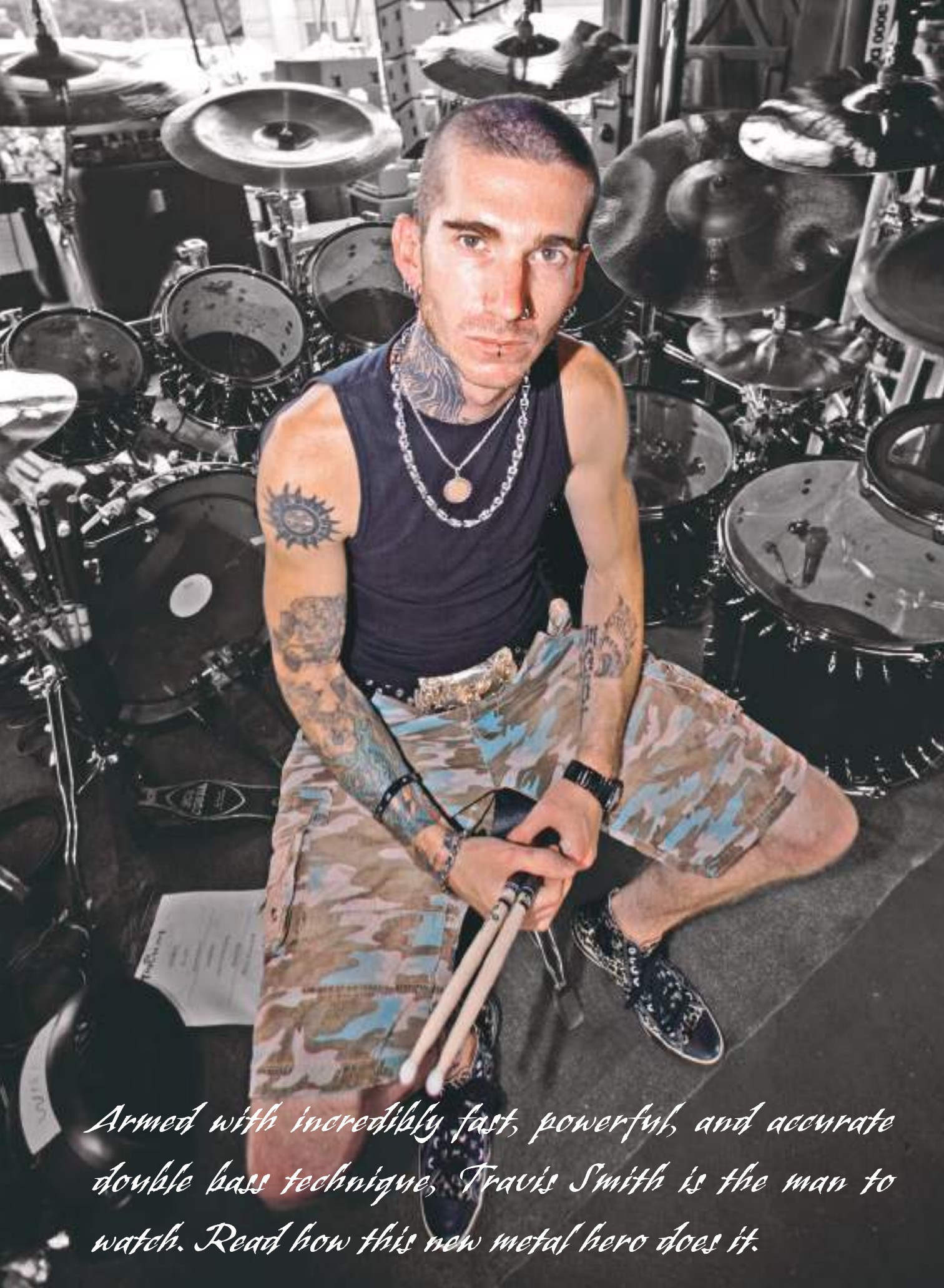

Armed with incredibly fast, powerful, and accurate double bass technique, Travis Smith is the man to watch. Read how this new metal hero does it.

Trivium's TRAVIS Smith

The Sickest Feet In Metal

Trivium drummer Travis Smith's career launched with a slightly rocky start. As a pre-teen growing up in Florida, Smith recalls having to be coaxed out of playtime with neighborhood friends by his father to attend his regular drum lessons. According to the drummer, "Having to go to lessons when you want to be out riding your bike with your friends is tough. But when I'd get to my lesson, I'd totally enjoy it. And I'm glad I stuck with them, because they've really paid off."

"Paid off" could be considered an understatement. A decade after getting his start behind the kit, Smith has become one of the most recognized rising drum stars in extreme metal. With the release of Trivium's second album, 2005's *Ascendancy* on Roadrunner Records, Smith and his bandmates found themselves fast becoming a major stage act, co-headlining 2006's Download Festival with Korn and Metallica in the UK, as well as the domestic Sounds Of The Underground tour. In addition, Trivium has achieved several accolades from a variety of publications both at home and abroad. That's outstanding for a band that, just three years earlier, was slugging it out in underground metal circles.

For the twenty-four-year-old Smith, getting to this point has been nothing short of a dream. But listen closely to any Trivium song from the band's three albums, including its newly released full-length, *The Crusade*, and you'll quickly realize why Smith has been such an integral part of Trivium's success. His strict attention to detail, fluid ability to up the ante at any given moment, and unmatched double kick drive at blistering speeds have given the drummer an advantage that's earned him well-deserved recognition, most notably from his own fans. And for this thrash metal maestro who was raised on drummers like Dave Grohl and Lars Ulrich, that's the ultimate compliment and motivation.

"It feels really good to be making an impact," Smith says. "It's gratifying to know that people are really enjoying what I do. And it's rewarding when people come up during signings and ask me, 'On this song, I need to know how to play that part.' It's like, Wow, people are noticing, people are paying attention. That's really wonderful."

Story by Waleed Rashidi • Photos by Paul La Raia

MD: What did you do to get into gear for *The Crusade*?

Travis: For this one, most of the material was written on the road by the other guys in the band. I didn't have a lot of time with them to sit and jam the parts. We didn't have the space or the time to do it.

We came off the road, and the next week we went into rehearsals to get the parts down. And then we went into pre-production, where I came up with what was essentially a rough draft of what I wanted to achieve for this album. And then I went in and banged out my parts in two and a half days. We had four days in the studio for tracking, but we had some technical difficulties, so it took a little longer.

I just pumped my way through and banged out my parts. Even so, I was very happy with the outcome. Considering the lack of time that I had, I came out with some pretty killer stuff that I'm proud of.

We had that week of rehearsal where I could go in and get familiar with the songs. I was familiar with some of the material, because the guys had been giving me demos. But I didn't have any time to sit behind a kit and work it out. I just had stuff in my head that I wanted to do. I went straight into tracking after that.

MD: How seamless was the operation?

Travis: We moved pretty quickly in the studio. We don't like to waste any time; we're pretty efficient. But I was a little nervous at first because our time was really crunched. We couldn't afford any delays. But once I started in the studio and got tracking, all that nervousness went away.

MD: Getting to make a new record allows you a chance to re-define yourself as a drummer. Did you feel like you had a chance to pull some new parts out of the bag?

Travis: Yes. I got to do a lot of stuff on this record that I didn't get to do on the previous one. I got to change up the style a little bit. I was stuck in a comfort zone for the last two years of touring. But now I was able to step outside of that box and try to do new things. It's really refreshing to do new music.

MD: With such little prep time, what was the trickiest part of making *The Crusade*?

Travis: There's an instrumental song we recorded that was a little more technical. I

had to provide the right feel for the music. I got to stand out at times and get the point across. That song was a bit of a challenge to do. It was actually a little quicker to record, but it was one of those songs that, in writing the parts, was a little nerve-wracking.

MD: Just because you were so exposed?

Travis: Exactly. That was the whole thing. It was also about writing drum parts that would stand out on their own *and* writing parts that complement the other players.

MD: Was the album's production set up any differently?

Travis: We tracked with Jason Suecof again, who tracked our last album. I did all of the drum sounds at Mooresound Studios in Tampa. I love that room. It's a really big room and it makes for full-bodied drums.

We tried some new miking techniques on the disc too. I had eleven room mic's this time. It was really about trying to get the full sound of the cymbals and the toms, the "bigness" of the kit. I think we used about thirty mic's total on the kit for the album. I wanted a full sound.

My whole thing is that when I go in to record drums, I always go back to Metallica's black album. The drums on that album are just totally untouchable and amazing-sounding. My goal is to one day have my drums sound like that. You can hear everything that's going on. That said, I think we did a pretty good job on this one.

Jason has some very good concepts when it comes to creating music. For the most part, he lets me do my thing. But I usually listen to him because he has some really killer ideas. On this recording, we discussed getting away from the kind of stuff I did on the last record. And he totally helped me out, letting me know when I'd fall into those patterns. He would remind me and we'd try something else.

MD: Do you record with a click track?

Travis: Yes. I think recording to a click makes me play better.

MD: Do you use a click live?

Travis: No, because we don't want to lose that live feel. I know some people forbid speeding up or slowing down on songs, but for us, it's part of the live feel that we really enjoy. If we're really pumped up about something and a tune goes a couple of BPM quicker, then it's really no big deal for us, because we like it.

But for recording sessions, I really like playing to a click because it's one less

Travis' Kit

Drums: ddrum Dominion Ash in black/natural finish
- **A.** 7x14 snare
- **B.** 8x8 tom
- **C.** 9x10 tom
- **D.** 10x12 tom
- **E.** 12x14 tom
- **F.** 16x16 floor tom
- **G.** 16x18 floor tom
- **H.** 20x24 bass drum

Cymbals: Sabian
- **1.** 18" AAXtreme Chinese
- **2.** 17" AAXplosion crash
- **3.** 14" AAX hi-hats
- **4.** 18" AAXplosion crash
- **5.** 19" AAXplosion crash
- **6.** 18" Vault Chinese
- **7.** 18" AAXplosion crash
- **8.** 20" HH Big Bell ride
- **9.** 14" AAX hi-hats
- **10.** 19" AAXplosion crash
- **11.** 20" Paragon Chinese
- **12.** 20" AAXplosion crash

Hardware: ddrum stands, Tama Iron Cobra bass drum pedals (medium spring tension)

Heads: Remo Emperor X on snare batter, Ambassador snare-side, clear Emperors on tops of toms, Ebony Ambassadors on bottoms, clear PowerStroke 3s on bass drum batters with Ebony PowerStroke 3s on front

Sticks: Pro-Mark 5B model (hickory with nylon tip)

Electronics: ddrum D4 module

thing for me to have to think about while I'm playing. I don't want to have to worry about keeping it all in perfect time.

MD: I understand that you're now playing a ddrum kit.

Travis: Yes, I'm a using their Dominion Ash kit. Ddrum is located in Tampa, Florida, and I'm in Orlando, so it's not far. I went to their headquarters and met with them, and they had a kit set up for me, which was an ash. I was stoked about it and really liked the way it sounded.

I started to talk to the guys at ddrum about a custom kit design that I wanted to create. They were into the idea. The next thing I know, I get a phone call from them saying, "Come down and check out your new kit. It's ready." I was blown away. To see my vision come to life was amazing. I was stunned by it.

MD: Have your sizes changed?

Travis: The tom sizes are a little different. And the kick drums are different too; instead of being 18x24, they're 20x24. That's the only real difference, besides having my own custom flair, which involves the drums having a bunch of 1" spikes sticking out of them.

MD: On the subject of your double kick technique, how did you get your start, and how did it progress through the years?

Travis: I got my first double kick pedal when I was fourteen, and I was horrible at it. I was taking lessons at the time, and my teacher, Joey Everline, gave me pointers on different technique styles.

When I first started, I was like full-blown, go for it. I didn't really have technique. But over time, I started to develop my own technique, which involved playing heel up. And that worked for a while. But eventually, I couldn't get as fast as I wanted by playing heel-up. You're moving too much of your leg when you play that way. It wasn't consistent, and I would tire a lot quicker.

About two years ago, I started working on this other technique where I play almost flat-footed, heel-down, and let the pedals

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do the work instead of my whole leg. I started to develop that technique on the pads, and then I translated it to the kit. I'm very happy with the outcome. I'm a lot more relaxed now, I play a lot faster, and I'm able to maintain consistency much more so than playing heel-up.

MD: How long did it take you to get that technique together?

Travis: It's something that took a while, and then it just kind of came one day. I remember we were playing somewhere in England and I came to this part of a song that would sometimes give me trouble, especially if I was having a bad day. And it was one of those shows where I was like, "Man, I don't think I'm playing well." When that part came up, I was thinking, "Ah, great, I'm going to blow this." And then, I guess, from just practicing that heel-down technique for so long, my body naturally took over, and, *bam*, I just flew through the part. I was like, "Damn, man, it's really paying off! My body is just starting to naturally take over instead of me having to think about it."

I don't like to think about a part when I play. I just want my body to naturally do it. I've learned from the past that when I start to think about what I'm going to do, that's normally when I mess up. It just started happening and I was really happy with the outcome.

MD: What kind of practice routine do you have?

Travis: I still practice every day, before we go on. I always practice my double bass technique. And I always practice my hand technique. I always try to improve.

Normally before a show, I'll spend about a half hour to forty-five minutes on pads. And I'll do about fifteen minutes of stretching before that. So it's almost an hour-long process before I go up on stage.

With my hands, I'll do a bunch of big, open 8ths to stretch out and get warmed up. Then I'll do a lot of doubles, and then doubles with accents. It settles my mind and gets me relaxed. And then, after that, I'll go into triplet exercises, which are a lot like the double exercises I do, except it's all with triplets. After a couple of rotations of that, I'll start freestyling my hands—throwing in different rudiments, different flams, doubles, and triplets, just to keep my mind free and relaxed. Then I'll go back and run through the whole routine again, but I add in my feet as well. I also work on odd combinations, like right hand, right foot, left hand, left foot, right hand, right foot, left hand. Then I'll work into 16ths with some triplets thrown in the middle, and then 16ths with some 32nd notes thrown in.

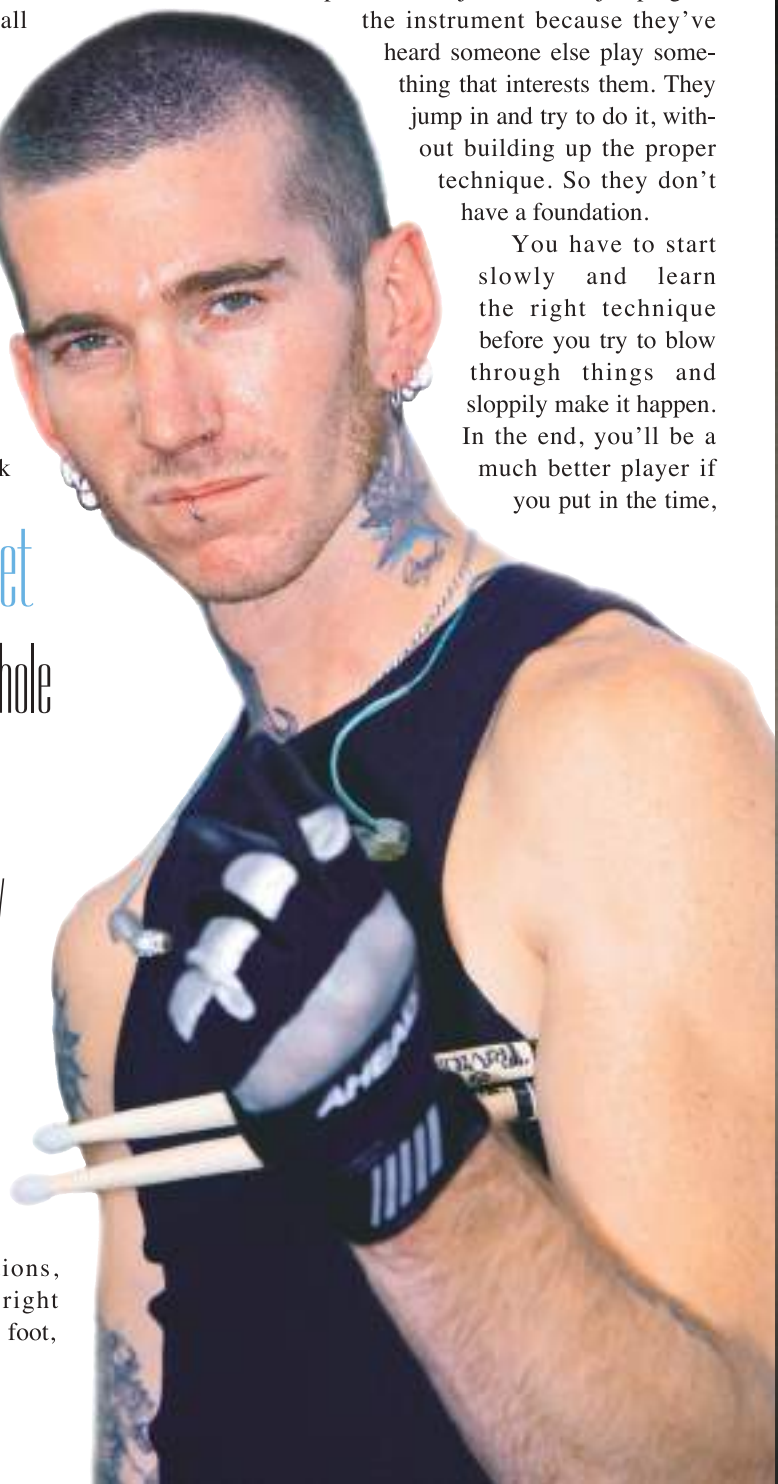
After I go through all of that, I try to calm down my feet. I just sit there, maybe do another set of stretches. Then I'll just play continuous 16ths with my feet to get into the zone.

MD: So what's a quick tip you could give to those starting out in metal?

Travis: The best piece of advice I could give is to practice, practice, practice. Most people I've met just start out jumping on the instrument because they've heard someone else play something that interests them. They jump in and try to do it, without building up the proper technique. So they don't have a foundation.

You have to start slowly and learn the right technique before you try to blow through things and sloppily make it happen. In the end, you'll be a much better player if you put in the time,

"I play almost flat-footed, heel-down, and I let the pedals do the work instead of my whole leg. I'm a lot more relaxed now, I play faster, and I'm able to maintain consistency much more so than playing heel-up."



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Travis Smith

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MD: What type of pedals do you use?

Travis: I still use Tama Iron Cobras. I really like them. I've been using Iron Cobras for many years, and I haven't found another pedal I've enjoyed as much.

MD: How particular are you about your kit?

Travis: I'm *very* particular. My tech has his hands full with me. I'm the kind of drummer who wants his tech to use measuring tape to make sure everything is exact, every time. My pedal spring tension has to be exact. I always know if it's not set properly. All of my cymbals and stands have to be uniform and point towards my eyeballs. Everything's set up on my kit so it's very easy to reach. I don't want to strain to reach any part of my kit.

MD: I understand that you're a Dave Grohl fan.

Travis: Yeah, Dave introduced me to a lot of stuff, like ghost notes. I was a huge Nirvana fan when I was younger, and he was the first drummer I paid attention to. He just blew me away. I eventually was introduced to drummers in the metal scene, but Dave was the first one who made me listen to drumming on records. He really stood out to me.

MD: Do you feel like you've channeled some of his influence in your material?

Travis: For sure, man. The way I think about it is, there are a lot of drummers out there playing killer stuff. And if you're doing it all the time, well, that's great. But if there's a part of a song that could really use it, well, if you're overplaying all of the time, that one part won't stand out. Sometimes simpler is better. Then, when you do get to a part where a banging drum thing needs to happen, you'll really stand out and make much more of an impact. It will have a better effect on the listener.

MD: Do you feel a lot of drummers, particularly in your genre, are guilty of overplaying these days?

Travis: I do. A lot of people are overplaying and it kind of kills the music. You've got to think of the song as a whole when you're writing drum parts. Sure, I could make it all about me, but that doesn't benefit the song. Look at Mike Portnoy: That guy could pull out every trick in the book, but a lot of times he just keeps it grooving until the song needs a big punch in the face. And when that moment happens, you're like, "God, this is great."

MD: You've mentioned that you went through lessons, so you're obviously a schooled drummer.

Travis: I took lessons for seven years, and I was in band for seven years. I played in orchestra and marching band through middle school and high school. I read music and I took music theory in school. So I learned what I needed to know to get myself ready. And that background helps me. Sometimes I reach back into that and use it to my advantage. Sometimes I just let it flow and don't overthink it.

MD: Under what circumstances would you reach back to your music theory knowledge?

Travis: For instance, going back to that instrumental song on the new album, that had some funky time signatures. And during pre-production, we had a white board that we'd write the time signatures on to learn the parts. When we were jamming, we'd follow it. Corey [Beaulieu, Trivium guitarist] is good at theory, too. We'd map out what time signatures we were trying to play in so that all of us could follow.

MD: Did you always want to play metal?

Travis: For most bands I played in, I wasn't happy with the material. I wanted to be in a *metal* band, not a rock band. After a while of not finding the right project, I was like, screw it, I've got to put my own band together. That's how Trivium started. I found people who really wanted to play metal. And it all just kind of went from there. That was around 1999.

We've been jamming ever since. We've gone through guitar players and bass players, but we've always stuck by each other. This has been our dream since day one. It's been what I've always wanted to do with my life.

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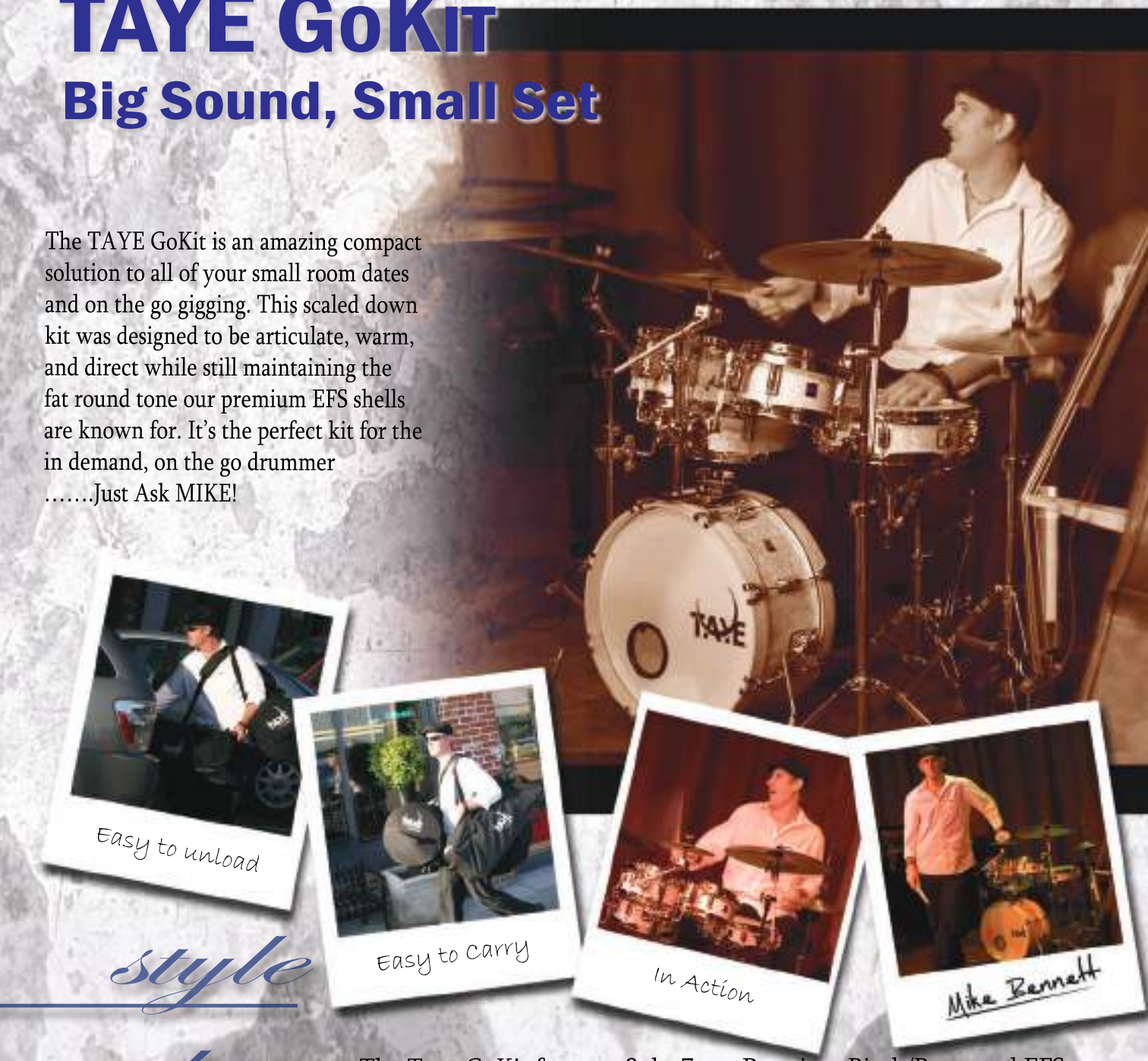

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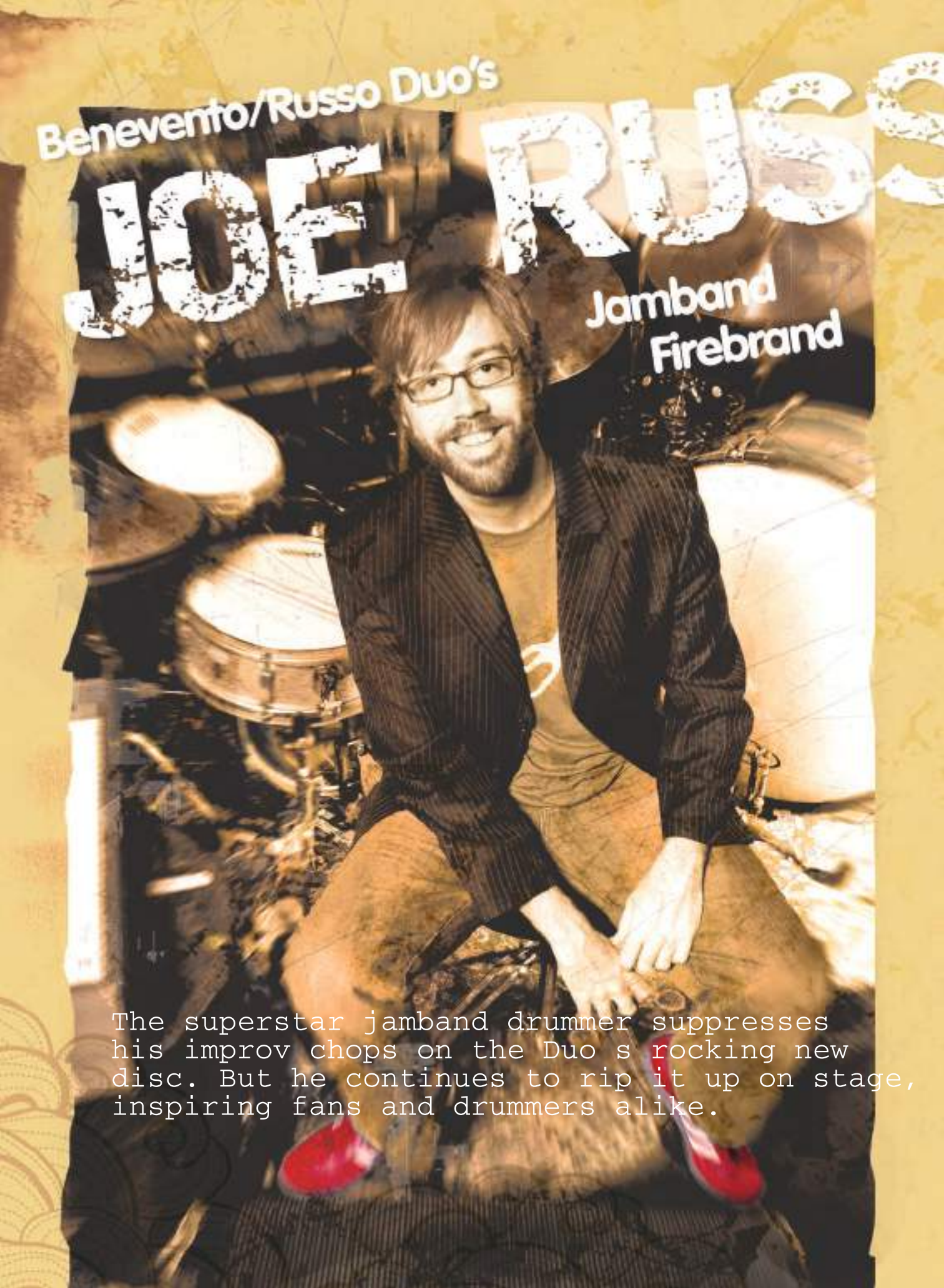


The superstar jamband drummer suppresses his improv chops on the Duo s rocking new disc. But he continues to rip it up on stage, inspiring fans and drummers alike.

Organ and drums. Those three words pretty much sum up the early days of the Benevento/Russo Duo. It was that simple: Marco Benevento played organ, Joe Russo played drums, and their performances were wholly improvised affairs that found the twosome squaring off onstage and fitting right into the groovy-spacey-jazzy aesthetic that defined their original home, the Knitting Factory in New York City. If a fan wanted to follow the pair to one of their first gigs outside NYC, tour dates could be found at OrganAndDrums.com.

But with last summer's release of the Duo's second studio album, *Play Pause Stop*, co-produced by Matt Chamberlain, all but the last vestiges of the "organ and drums" era no longer apply. Benevento's keyboard arsenal has grown far beyond the distinctive yet limited voice of the organ. Russo has incorporated a triggering setup—not to mention a guitar—into his *batterie*. And, perhaps most significantly, the two muscians have begun to sculpt carefully arranged instrumental-rock epics, ushering their sound far from the jazz-improv circuit and into the world of sweeping, stirring indie rock.

On hearing their records, it's no longer easy to picture two sweaty guys jamming endlessly in a basement with no real repertoire; this stuff sounds like a full band. A band that refuses to simply flaunt its chops. A band that's shed its confining original Web address and now spreads its word on BeneventoRussoDuo.com.

That's not to say that those who catch the Duo expecting to see the old, let-it-all-hang-out Joe Russo will leave disappointed. He and Benevento indeed stick to their arrangements onstage, but there's plenty of room for the kind of musical shenanigans that are the stuff of Russo legend. He plays with a loose-limbed, way-on-top energy, constantly switching his left-hand grip from matched to traditional and back again, while alternating from the tip to the butt of the stick in his right hand—and repeatedly pushing his sliding glasses up the bridge of his nose. He ditches his hard-earned studio discipline and returns to the place where too much is never enough. He might not practice these days, and he'll say things such as, "I'm not a big 'drum' guy," but his playing reflects years of experience in a multitude of genres—and you don't get burning single strokes like that just by listening to records. *MD* first spoke to Russo in 1999, when he was with Fat Mama, a seven-piece (and sometimes larger) group that mixed funk with electronica and progressive downtown jazz. After Fat Mama disbanded ("We imploded—we were really young, traveling and making no money, playing weird music with a big band," Joe says), Russo was kicking around the Knitting Factory Tap Bar for a weekly gig in 2002, when he ran into Benevento, an old friend from Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. He invited Marco to sit in. The two-piece lineup felt good, but the early Duo was just one of several projects Russo presented during his Thursday night residency. At the time, the drummer was also a member of keyboardist Robert Walter's touring band.

But soon the reunited pals hit the road for a two-week run, and it was clear something was beginning to click. The Duo released a couple of live recordings and began to tour regularly, and in 2004 the band put out its first proper studio album, *Best Reason To Buy The Sun*. Produced by Joey Waronker, the LP hinted at the rock-anthem songwriting that would later characterize *Play Pause Stop*, but it also contained jazzy holdovers from the "organ and drums" days.

Meanwhile, the Duo was playing a few of its two hundred or so annual live dates with a third member, former Phish bassist Mike Gordon. These collaborations led to an invitation from erstwhile Phish guitarist Trey Anastasio to record a few tracks, with Gordon, for Anastasio's latest album, *Bar 17*. Practically before they knew it, the just-hatched quartet, which fans dubbed GRAB (for Gordon, Russo, Anastasio, and Benevento), booked a summer tour: a double bill with Phil Lesh & Friends followed by a string of GRAB-headlined shows. It was an irresistible arrangement for the Duo: They got to play with musicians that had inspired and influenced them, and nightly opening slots allowed them to remain focused on their stripped-down lineup while raising their profile before thousands of new listeners.

Story by Michael Parillo

The Duo in full flight

MD caught up with Russo in his adopted hometown of Brooklyn, while he was preparing for the Duo's fall cross-country trek. It sounded like Joe's heart was still in the studio, a place where he's grown increasingly comfortable over the last few years. He previewed a few laid-back tracks from a new side project, Tom Hamilton's American Babies, and mused about the days ahead when the Duo can take a rest from the road. "Eventually it would be fun to just make records," he says, "getting crazy in the studio and having that be your day job. Have you seen *I Am Trying To Break Your Heart*, the Wilco documentary? Those guys, just sitting in the studio like that—that would be amazing!"

MD: Everything about the Duo is based on the connection between you and Marco. Can you describe that connection a bit?

Joe: It was immediate. Instantly, there were telepathic moments that started to fuel what we were doing. We started testing each other in a sense, playfully, just playing with full abandon. I think that's what got us through the beginning of our band, the excitement of that connection. And the cool thing is seeing how that connection has moved into the music we're doing now. It's a neat double-sided thing: We know we can go out and improvise, but it's also fun to put that mindset into playing arranged music.

MD: Was it ever frustrating playing with just one other person?

Joe: In the beginning, yeah. I'd come from a seven-piece band with sounds coming in from all over the place, and after a while the novelty of a duo started wearing off—until we found a band sound. Now it's liberating, and I couldn't imagine doing anything else without that in my life.

For a while we wanted to hear other sounds, but we just became the other bandmembers. That was a cue from Charlie Hunter, who said something early on that's stuck with us: "Just because you're a duo doesn't mean it just has to be organ and drums." At the time we were Hammond organ and a little drumset—we had no other gear.

MD: How have you achieved a fuller sound?

Joe: That happened organically, as we played more and started writing more and were getting more gear. I started throwing in drum loops on my Roland pads, and I started looping Marco's keyboard parts, which frees him up. And now Marco's got bass pedals and this huge array of gear and effects. I have my drum rig plus my triggering stuff, which is a huge part of the band, and I have guitars and keyboards.

MD: You blend those instruments with the drums onstage?

Joe: Yeah. There's a tune I play guitar on, "Memphis," where I'm playing kick and tambourine hats with my feet. On other stuff I'll be playing a beat and triggering notes on the sampler, while Marco's playing bass, comping another part, and playing a melody.

I'm not using the Roland for beats as much anymore. I divide the nine pads on the SPD-S into different tones, and I'll play a melody, like playing a nine-note piano. We're trying not to cheat as much with drum and keyboard loops. Some things we have to loop out of necessity, but we're trying to find a way to do it all in real time. I don't feel like there's a rhythmic or melodic leader, and it doesn't feel like there's a keyboardist and a drummer onstage. It's two musicians playing everything they possibly can to make the song sound like it does.

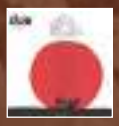
Even when it was just organ and drums, we were still filling space, and it still had the illusion of being more than two guys. But it was *so* much all the time. It feels good to not have to do as much on the drumkit as I did before I had the melodic stuff going on with the other instruments. But covering all this space and getting so many tones out of a kit is gratifying too. I still love that.

MD: You started out doing all-improv sets, but *Play Pause Stop* is largely composed. Are you improvising less live?

Joe: Some songs need to stay true to form, but we'll go nuts on the ones that have areas for improv. If we were just playing free all night, it wouldn't be as fun, because it's such a switch in emotion. It's more exciting to have a little bit than to get it all the time.

Russo On Record

Artist	Album
Benevento Russo Duo	Play Pause Stop
Benevento Russo Duo	Best Reason To Buy The Sun
Benevento Russo Duo	Raw Horse Live (Japanese release)
Tom Hamilton	American Babies
Fat Mama	Load *, 8, 1
Fat Mama	Live
Benevento Russo Duo	Marco Benevento & Joe Russo
Benevento Russo Duo	Darts



His Favorites

Artist	Album	Drummer
Radiohead	all	Phil Selway
Led Zeppelin	all	John Bonham
Beatles	all	Ringo Starr
Beck	Odelay	Joey Waronker
Wilco	Yankee Hotel Foxtrot	Glenn Kotche
Wilco	A Ghost Is Born	Glenn Kotche
Ima Robot	Ima Robot	Joey Waronker
Something For Rockets	self-titled release	Barry Davis

Plus anything with/by: Rufus Wainwright, Ween, Nirvana, Iron Maiden, Jack DeJohnette, Tony Williams, Al Foster, Bobby Previte, Joey Baron, and Kenny Wollesen.

MD: The new album sounds lush and even romantic.

Joe: Yeah, it's kind of cinematic, and it feels emotional. We were writing from an emotional point and were unafraid to let those emotions into our music. When we first started, it was all about how we *played*. It was our chops, our interplay, and our improvisation. Now it's fun to convey emotion with our songs, without vocals, and have it feel almost lyrical, without lyrics.

MD: Let's talk about working with your producers, since they're both great drummers. Joey Waronker produced *Best Reason*, and Matt Chamberlain co-produced *Play Pause Stop*.

Joe: For *Best Reason,* we needed to have someone come in and trim the fat, push us in the direction that we wanted to go. Around the time we were thinking about producers, I got a call from Joey to see if I wanted to audition for this band Ima Robot, who he was playing with at the time. That was crazy, because I loved Ima Robot, and because Joey Waronker had just called me on the phone, I freaked out.

I ended up not doing the audition, but I remember leaving him a message about producing us. I said we played kind of instrumental jazz-rock but we really wanted to do more of a rock thing. Later I checked my messages and it was like, "Hey, it's Joey Waronker. That sounds really cool."

We ended up going to L.A. and doing all the recording in two days. It was a really intense, brief thing. If we had more time with Joey, we probably could have gotten into more stuff on that record. But he did a really good job of going, "That song cannot be on the record," and helping to give us more of the rock edge we heard in our minds. It was the starting point for what we're doing now.

MD: How did Matt Chamberlain get involved?

Joe: We ended up throwing another song on *Best Reason*, "9x9," after the album was done. We were doing a Ropeadope New Music Seminar tour, and Matt was on the tour with Critters Buggin'. We asked if we could go up to Seattle and do that tune in his studio with him producing or engineering. But Matt's so busy doing all these huge things and just being an all-around badass that it ended up falling through.

When this record came up, we talked about Matt and Jon Brion, maybe having both those guys co-produce it. Jon wasn't available, but Matt was in, and he got Tom Biller, who's Jon's engineer and ended up being co-producer. The team of those two together was just incredible.

We ended up doing it at Tom's studio, which is this cryptic little Grandma's '50s basement place in Echo Park in L.A., strewn with really cool gear all over the place. It was such a chill vibe, which was so different from the time before, when we were rushed. Jon Brion sent over a bag of cymbals, and timpani—we had this kid-in-a-candy-store gear-fest. So maybe we'll keep using drummers as producers. [laughs]

MD: Did you use any of your own gear?

Joe's Drums

Drums: Slingerland (mid-'60s era) in black diamond pearl
- **A.** 6½x14 Ludwig wood snare (circa 1962)
- **B.** 8x12 rack tom
- **C.** 14x14 floor tom
- **D.** 14x20 bass drum
- **E.** 14x30 Ludwig marching bass drum

Cymbals: Istanbul Agop
- **1.** 15" Traditional hi-hats
- **2.** 21" Mel Lewis ride (with rivets)
- **3.** 22" Traditional ride
- **4.** 17" Traditional Dark crash
- **5.** 21" Mel Lewis ride (broken)

Percussion: LP tambourine, various shakers
- **cc.** Rhythm Tech DST tambourine

Electronics: various
- **aa.** Hohner Harmonium
- **bb.** Roland SPD-S

Hardware: various stands, DW 5000 chain drive pedal on main bass drum (loose spring tension, felt beater), Tama Iron Cobra on marching bass drum ("squishy" home-made beater made by Zak Najor of The Greyboy Allstars)

Heads: Evans coated G2 on tops of snare and toms, Hazy 200 snare-side, clear G1s on tom bottoms, EMAD on main bass drum batter, black EQ3 on front (EQ Pad for muffling), MX1 on marching bass drum batter, Strata 1000 on front

Sticks: Vater Manhattan 7A (hickory with wood tip)

Guitar: Takamine acoustic

Joe: Some. I brought all my stuff out, but Matt was switching gear on me for every song. He's like, "On this tune I want a 24" kick and an 18" floor, but you can use your rack tom!" Or "No, we need a crappier snare drum!" He really got some cool, creepy drum sounds, not your average thing.

MD: At the end of the title tune there's a kick part that sounds great.

Joe: Yeah, that's my 30" marching bass drum. It's an old '50s Ludwig. It's really thin—14". Every session I do, it's there in some facet. It's all over the *American Babies* session I just did.

MD: On that track it sounds very far away.

Joe: That's how I always heard that drum. I described it, and they totally nailed it: "Like this?" I'm like, "Yup. You guys are jerks—you're too good at this." [laughs]

MD: Are you still using vintage gear live?

Joe: Yeah. I picked up this mid-'60s Slingerland kit from Nodar Rode in New York, the crazy Russian drum dealer. Really cool dude. I have the 30" Ludwig, and I still have my old '62 Ludwig snare. I love vintage stuff. I've been talking with some companies about an endorsement. I'd like some new gear, but it's gonna be a hard switch if in fact that happens.

MD: Does the 30" kick have a remote pedal onstage?

Joe: No, I just do the stretch, which usually leads to me ripping my pants. I tried the remote thing for a second, but it didn't feel right.

MD: You use two hands on the hi-hat to great effect on *Play Pause Stop*.

Joe: It's fun—I'm not afraid to be obvious anymore. I used to avoid that at all costs, and now I'm so happy being deliberate.

MD: Let's talk about your collaboration with the Phish guys. How did Mike Gordon enter the picture?

Joe: We met a few years back, when he was putting together a band for his solo tour. I went to his place in Manhattan and we did some playing. That tour ended up not working out, but we said we'd play again sometime.

Soon after that, there was a benefit concert for [voter-registration group] HeadCount.org. It was such a politically charged time and I was trying to do whatever I could. So I asked Mike if he wanted to do a trio with Marco and me. He was like, "Cool. Well…how much rehearsing will it

Play The Life Out Of It!

Russo On Abusing His Cymbals

If you've caught Joe Russo live with the Duo, you've seen him put a hurt on his cymbals. By his account he goes through a ride every couple of months. Let's hear the tales of destruction in his own words.

"I break the hell outta cymbals—no fault of the manufacturer! I love digging in. I'll stab at them with the back of the stick, anything—throw a toaster at them. [laughs] When we were in the studio with Matt [Chamberlain], he was like, 'You really smack down old-school, don't you? Not enough people are doing that anymore!'

"I usually play cymbals until they don't make any sound, which becomes exhausting and drives our soundman insane. I'm like, 'I can't hear the cymbals,' and he's like, 'Dude, they don't make a sound! Stop telling me to turn them up!' Now the guys at Istanbul just send cymbals to me. They're very thoughtful and understanding of my problem with bashing.

"It's cool to play the life out of a cymbal. When you first get it, the sound can be too bright to have onstage. Eventually you get to the point where you can't use it because it doesn't make any sound. But in the life of a cymbal, there's always that one point where it's killin'. And then once it cracks, you know you've got a little bit of time to say goodbye." •

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involve?" I said none, and he went, "I'm in!"

So we got up onstage and improvised for an hour. We all went in without expectations, and there were some really cool moments. We were asked to play a festival a couple months later, so we taught Mike some Duo stuff, we learned some of his stuff, and we learned a Phish song, "Foam." We've done three or four short tours with Mike. It's been really fun.

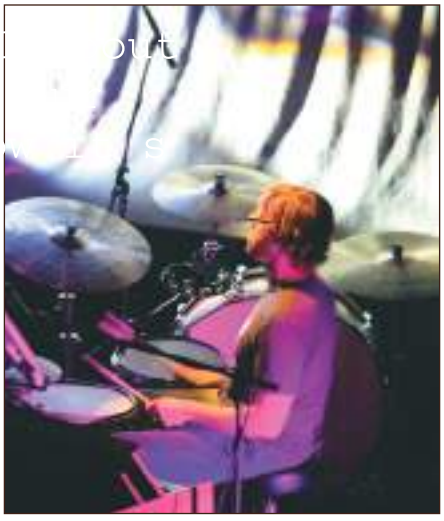
MD: How does his presence change things musically?

Joe: Marco doesn't play bass when Mike is with us. We really stretch things. It's playful, but it gets dark too. It's not the obvious kind of "jamming" thing. It's fun having Mike in that situation, because he's known for being the king of the jam scene. It's another one of those places where we just get onboard and whatever happens happens.

Through hearing about our shows with Mike, Trey invited the three of us to be his band for a few songs on his new record. So we ended up playing together for a whole day, improvising, rocking out, and writing. It was a very fun time, and that brought on the idea of doing a club gig in New York. That turned into a summer tour, and *that* turned into a tour of amphitheatres with Phil Lesh. The whole thing got a little blown up.

MD: How'd the tour go?

Joe: It was cool. We decided to debut the band at the Bonnaroo Festival without announcing it. Before that we had four days of rehearsal and tried to get as much material together as possible.



> When we first started, it was a[illegible] how we played. It was our chops interplay, and our improvisation. N[illegible]

The Bonnaroo show was really fun, but we kind of pile-drived through a lot of material. When we started the tour, it took a while to settle. I couldn't go out and do what I normally do—I had to find a role and fill it. We all talked a lot about the music and about trying to turn four guys into a band in a few weeks.

MD: You couldn't do what you'd normally do because it was Anastasio's group and not a collective?

Joe: Yeah. It was the four of us, but people were definitely coming to see those guys more than they were coming to see Marco and me, and that's fine, as it should be. But I had to play differently. I couldn't just start playing free in that setting.

When we hit the last night of the tour with Phil, I felt like it was *on*. We all knew it *rocked*. Then, after that, it was just the four of us touring theaters and smaller outdoor venues. That's when it really caught steam. The second half of the tour was

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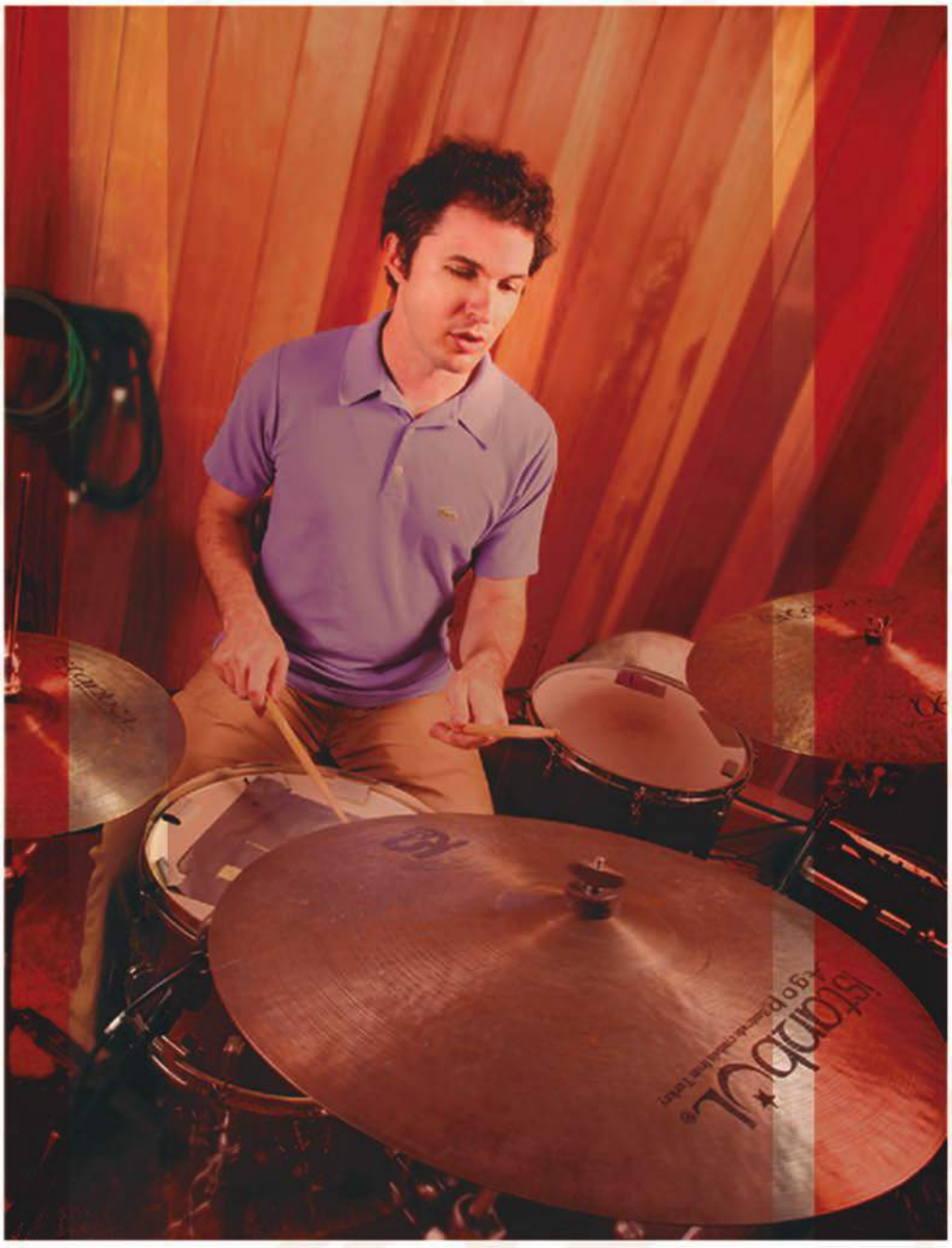

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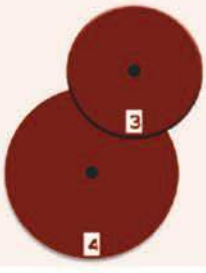

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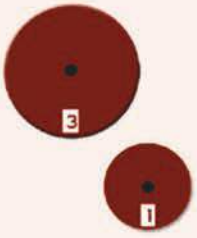
18" Traditional Thin Crash
20" Traditional Medium Ride



set-up 2

14" Signature Agop Hi-hat
20" 25th Anniversary Ride
22" 2006 Collector's Series Ride

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really memorable and meaningful. We could take more chances and be more comfortable with each other—and that's when the tour ended, of course.

MD: What music were you playing?

Joe: It was a lot of Trey's solo material. We didn't want to do any Phish songs. We weren't trying to re-create Phish or do anything to disrespect that entity. So we did Trey's stuff, some of Mike's stuff, some Duo stuff, and some covers. A lot of the covers came in while we were on the road. Mike brought in my favorite one, "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey," the Paul McCartney tune: "Hands across the water…." It's so much fun to play, all the weird tempo changes and stuff.

MD: Tell me about the *American Babies* recording you just made.

Joe: It's a new project I'm doing with my friend Tom Hamilton. He's the singer and guitarist in Brothers Past, and he's been writing all these amazing songs on the side. It's so *not* Brothers Past. It's kind of alt-country. The harmonies are gorgeous, and it's fun to step outside the Duo world and do something like this, because that's the kind of stuff I listen to. There's nothing crazy—it's just playing the right thing at the right time.

MD: Speaking of crazy, you're adept at playing in odd times, and lots of Duo tunes feature them.

Joe: Sometimes we get a little math-y. [laughs] But I never approach it like, Hey, this is in nine, so I'm going to count to nine. It's just how much space passes between here and there. I never try to break it down or count it. Later, I realize it's in nine. More than considering it odd time, I just consider it *time*. Obviously, though, when I was learning it, I had to think of it as odd.

The teacher that really got me involved with it, Frank Marino, had written a book on odd times. When I started going to him,

I was really into Rush and stuff like that. He saw that I took to odd times, and he showed me the ins and outs. He would subdivide and show how you can count things differently. I wasn't the best student, by any means, in *any* sense of the word, but when something piqued my interest, I really got into it. I love stretching time.

After understanding that it's all just math and whatever, I started realizing that between A and B it could be anything—you can count it however you want, as long as there's something happening in the middle that makes sense with whatever else is going on. I love that attitude, of filling it in with whatever you want to fill it in with.

MD: Do you ever get to practice drumming?

Joe: I haven't practiced in years. [laughs] I'd like to. But where I'm at now, I want to write songs more than practice. I think the last time I really sat down to work on something was 2001. And I don't have a studio in New York to leave a kit set up. But hopefully that can change soon.

I used to be *so* into it. From eight to eighteen, I practiced all day, all night. I was completely enveloped. But that switch happened where it was like, musicality matters. Of course, practicing aids in that. I think practicing made me play how I play now. But also, the *lack* of practicing also made me play the way I do, you know? I don't think it's necessarily a bad thing to *not* have everything quite there all the time, because accidents are cool and sucking sometimes in the right place can make it sound awesome. It's a lazy approach, but I think it's an honest approach.

When I'm home and off the road, I'll do studio stuff or other projects, so I'm still playing a lot. But I do normal-people stuff too. It's weird when people just sit in their basements and practice all day and don't experience life. You've got to do a little bit of both.

To hear some of Joe Russo's tracks, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.

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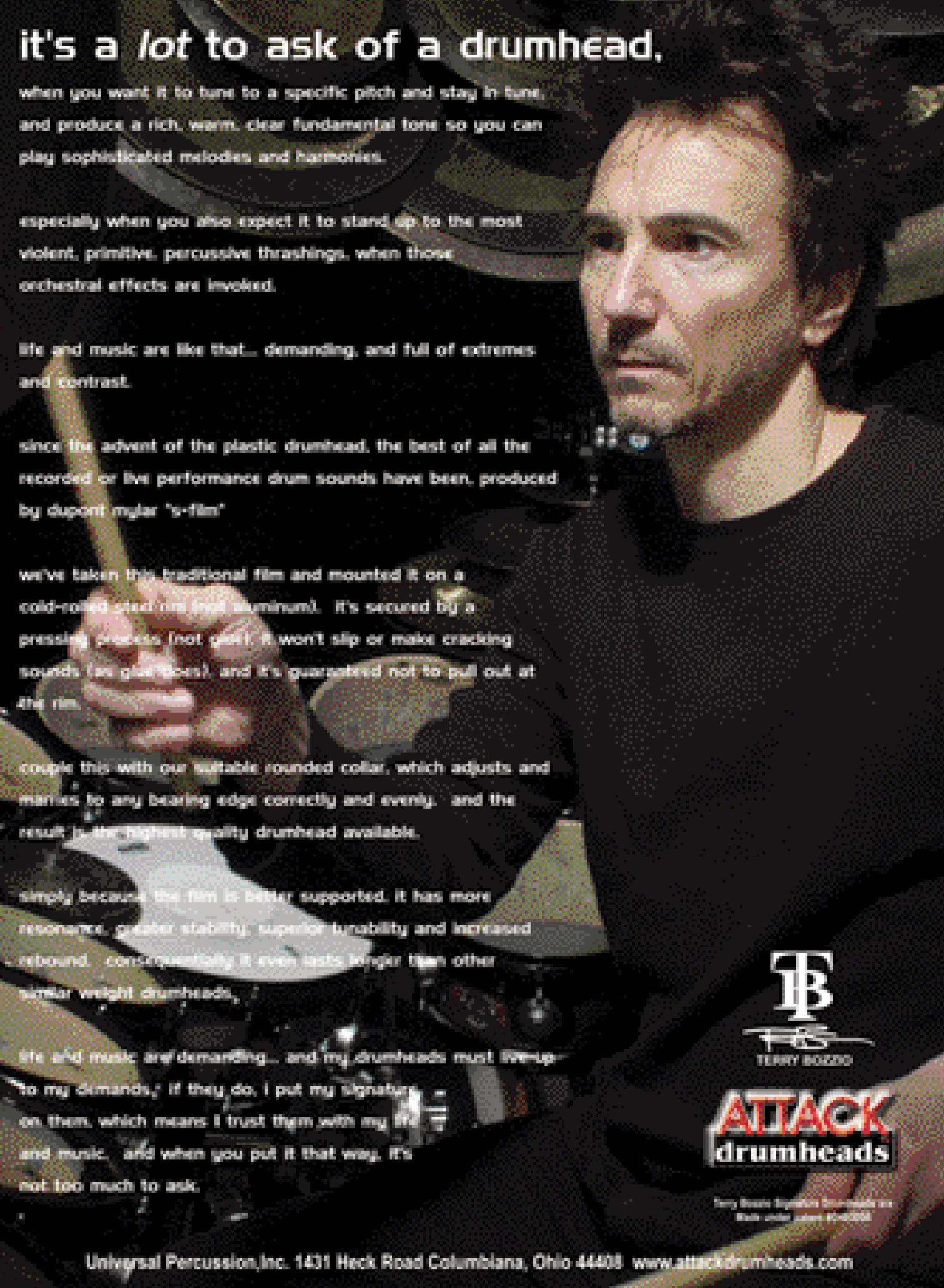
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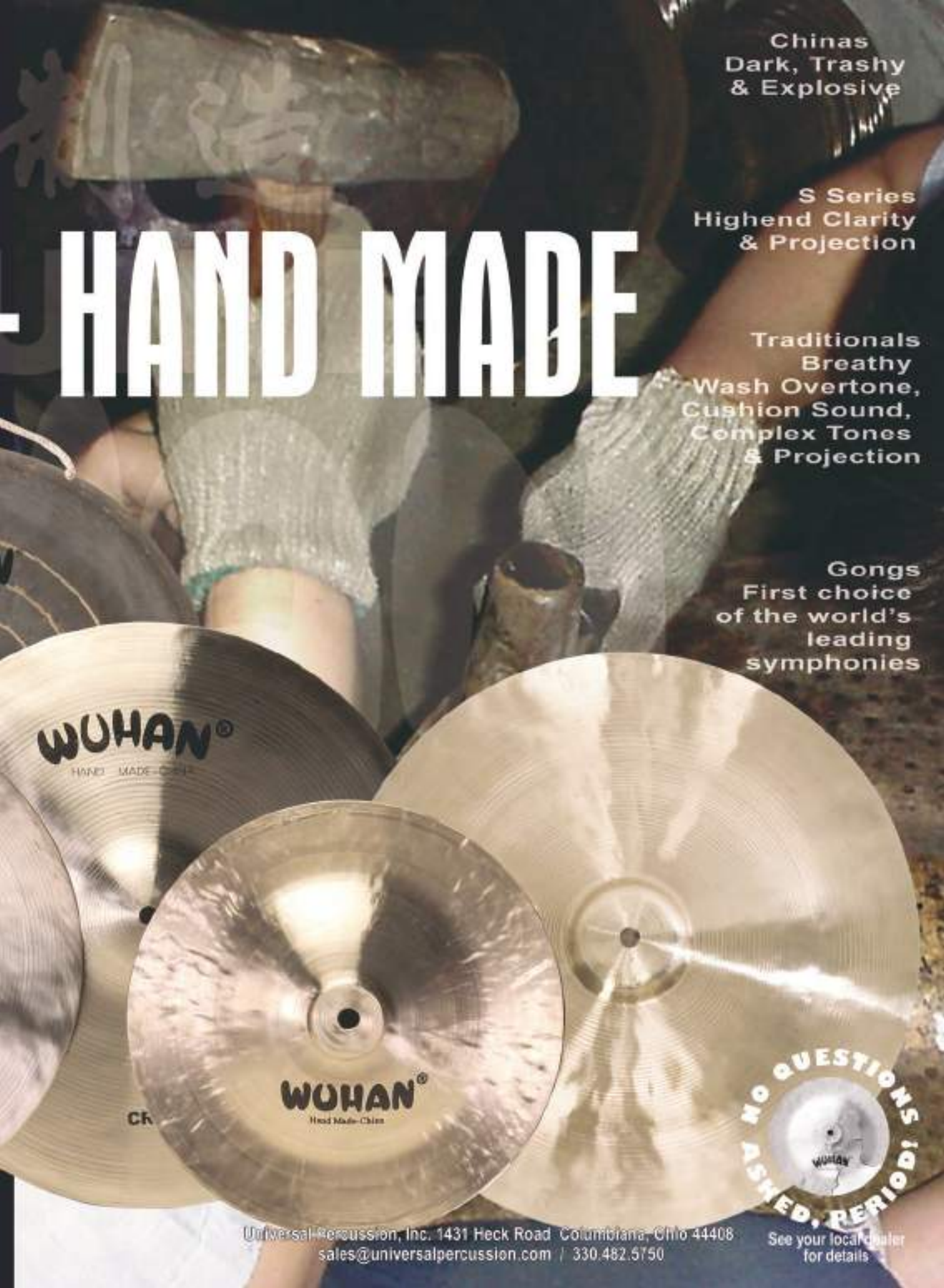
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SAVE YOUR EARS!

MD Looks At The Latest Info On Hearing Protection

Our profession is rife with occupational hazards. Many drummers suffer from low back pain, either from incorrect ergonomics at the drumset or schlepping all that heavy gear around (or both). And we've all heard about those afflicted with carpal tunnel syndrome, tendinitis, or some related malady due to the repetitive abuse we put our hands/wrists/elbows through. Then there's the simple fact that a musician's life is not always the healthiest of lifestyles: staying up late, often in smoke-filled bars and clubs...traveling for hours on end...eating badly on the road...being unable to exercise. Some of these dangers can be mitigated to one degree or another, while others just come with the territory. But there's one serious drum-related hazard that is almost entirely preventable, yet that is frequently ignored until some damage is already done.

We're talking, of course, about the dreaded NIHL: Noise Induced Hearing Loss. You'd think the name says it all—loud noise damages hearing, so don't expose your ears to loud noise. End of story, right? If only things were that simple.

by Mark Parsons

"When the human ear originally evolved, the purpose was to be alerted to small or distant sounds that might signal danger. It was never designed for a high-noise environment."

These Bilsom plugs are typical of flanged earplugs—constructed of thermoplastic with multiple flanges to fit a wide variety of ear canal sizes.

Musician's Earplugs from Etymotic Research feature interchangeable filters, allowing the user to vary the amount of attenuation.

Extreme Isolation earphones from Direct Sound allow you to monitor an audio signal while providing very good acoustic isolation.

The low pressure cavity of the Pura-Cone earplugs from Moldex increases comfort for extended wear.

The Times, They Are A Changin'

MD covered hearing protection in depth in 1997, with the two-part feature "Watch Your Ears." So why are we revisiting it now? First of all, some of the basic metrics of hearing protection are in a state of flux. Answers to such seemingly fundamental questions as, "What do we mean by hearing loss?" and "Exactly what constitutes excessive noise?" may be changing even as we speak.

There are also some new hearing protection products on the market, which can make saving your hearing even easier and more comfortable than ever before—including a new musical use for some decidedly non-musical HP products.

And finally, we put on our nerdy lab coats and safety glasses and did some data collection for you, to obtain some first-hand answers to the burning question, "So, exactly how loud are my drums, anyway?" (The results may surprise you.)

Regulatory Discord

Calculating noise exposure is similar to calculating radiation exposure: The dose rate (intensity of the radiation—or sound) multiplied by the exposure time (the amount of time you're being bombarded by the bad stuff) equals your dose (the amount of potential damage done to the affected organs).

The difference is that there are strict regulations in place for radiation workers, with agreed-upon industrial limits enforced by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. With noise exposure, however, things are not quite as black & white.

Any discussion of noise regulations involves lots of numbers and alphabet soup. Hang with this, though, for just a minute, because the results really do have significance regarding your hearing.

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) has long published their noise guidelines, known as Permitted Exposure Limits, or PELs. That's what we traditionally used to decide if certain sound levels were harmful. Well, another government agency, National Institute For Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH, a division of the Centers For Disease Control) has a not-so-slightly different view on where the limits should be placed.

OSHA's PELs say that you can be exposed to 90 dB for up to 8 hours per day, and that for every 5-dB increase, the permitted exposure time is cut in half (i.e., 95-dB for four hours, 100 dB for two hours, etc.). That's been an accepted standard for quite some time, and is currently the one used in the workplace by both OSHA and MSHA (Mine Safety & Health Administration).

However, NIOSH, which makes recommendations to regulatory agencies, has an REL (recommended exposure limit) that basically says don't go over 85 dB for eight hours. This in itself would cut all the OSHA PELs in half, as it has a 5-dB "head start" on them. But wait—there's more!

NIOSH also recommends halving the exposure time for every 3-dB increase (vs. 5 dB as per OSHA). This is *huge*, as the difference between the two builds up rapidly. (For example, OSHA says you can be exposed to 105 dB for one hour, while NIOSH says four minutes and forty-three seconds!)

So which should you listen to? A physiologist I know says "When in doubt, go with the science." In other words, choose research over politics. NIOSH has a publication that states that their recommended exposure limit "was reevaluated using contemporary risk assessment techniques and incorporating the 4,000-Hz audiometric frequency in the definition of hearing impairment. The new risk assessment reaffirms support for the 85-dBA REL." (I don't know about you, but I sure would consider a loss at 4,000 Hz to be within my definition of hearing impairment.) Furthermore, "With a forty-year lifetime exposure at the 85-dBA REL, the excess risk of developing occupational NIHL is 8%—considerably lower than the 25% excess risk at the 90-dBA PEL currently enforced by OSHA." This basically means that the NIOSH REL reduces your chances of suffering noise-induced hearing loss by three times that of the OSHA PEL.

And what about that exchange rate issue (the rate at which we halve the permitted exposure)? NIOSH says they "previously recommended an exchange rate of 5 dB for

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The Hornet earmuff from North is typical of passive muffs, providing inexpensive and reliable protection.

The Peltor Tactical 6S is representative of the best of the newer "active, level-dependant" earmuffs, which can be very useful in practice/rehearsal situations.

The simple tri-level (under 85 dB, 85–110 dB, over 110 dB) Hearing Alarm from Precision Labs is an inexpensive way to tell if you're getting into a potentially damaging situation.

the calculation of time-weighted average exposures to noise. However, NIOSH now recommends a 3-dB exchange rate, which is more firmly supported by scientific evidence. The 5-dB exchange rate is still used by OSHA and MSHA, but the 3-dB exchange rate has been increasingly supported by national and international consensus." This all makes perfect sense when you consider that the "Equal Energy Rule" states that for every 3-dB increase (or decrease), the amount of acoustic energy doubles (or is halved).

And finally, exactly what do we mean by "hearing loss"? The OSHA protocol is that you have a baseline exam, and if there is a threshold shift in your hearing in subsequent exams of ten decibels or more at either 2,000 Hz, 3,000 Hz, or 4,000 Hz, then your employer is required to provide you with hearing protection and training. And OSHA defines "material hearing impairment" as having a hearing threshold (when you can first perceive a sound) that is 25 dB above what is statistically "good" hearing, measured at 1,000, 2,000, and 3,000 Hz. (FYI, a 25-dB reduction in the midrange is what you get when wearing a good pair of earplugs. How'd you like to live with that 24/7?)

Seriously, there is no way someone who makes their living playing and listening to music wants to suffer a 10-dB loss (let alone 25!) to their hearing before they take action. For those to whom critical listening is an important function—everyone reading this magazine—any hearing loss that can be noticed by the individual or measured by an audiometric exam is to be avoided.

Almost all of the industrial limits we've discussed are based around measuring and mitigating loss in the midrange area, approximately 500 Hz to 4 kHz. This is because the ability to hear and understand human speech is the primary concern in the workplace. But for musicians and other audio professionals, a significant loss at 10 kHz, for example, could be just as detri-

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The E3 is but one of several in-ear monitors available from Shure.

Besides sticks and mallets, Vic Firth also sells the Stereo Isolation Headphone, popular with recording drummers.

mental as a loss at 2 kHz.

And to add to the problem, over-exposure to high SPLs can lead to things worse than a simple attenuation at certain frequencies. Losing some of your hearing is bad enough, but coupled with tinnitus (ringing in the ears) and other related afflictions, it can be devastating to the afflicted individual.

So What?

So what does this all mean to today's drummer? First of all, you may very well want to take much of what you thought you knew about "acceptable" noise exposure and throw it out the window. If the current NIOSH recommendations are more valid than the standard OSHA limits—and the scientific evidence sure seems to point that way—then unprotected exposure to loud sounds for even fairly brief periods of time may cause hearing damage. (See Table 1 for a comparison of the two standards.)

Even though the data in that table is sobering, it makes sense. Consider that when the human ear originally evolved, the purpose was to be alerted to small or distant sounds that might signal danger. So sensitivity was paramount. There are very few "loud" sounds in nature, and the human ear was never really designed for continuous function in a high-noise environment.

So now we have some quantitative answers to "How loud is too loud?" and "How long is too long?" But none of that is of any practical use unless we also investigate the question of "Exactly how loud are the drums, anyway?"

How Loud?

There are three primary factors that dictate how loud the drums are in any given situation: the specific drumset being played, the specific drummer doing the playing, and the acoustic environment. So while we can't tell you exactly how loud your drums are—with you playing them in your room—we can give you some pretty

precise data about how loud certain drums are under certain test conditions. From this you can extrapolate the levels in your particular situation. Following are the test conditions.

Measurement equipment: For these tests we used a Metrosonics dB-2100 sound level meter. This is a pro-quality digital SPL meter, which is better suited for accurately capturing peak sounds than an analog meter. It was set for the "A-weighted" scale, in "fast" response, for all testing. (In brief, the "A" weighting is more similar to the response of the human ear, while "C" weighting is more linear and is used for evaluating hearing protection hardware and other scientific purposes.)

Drumset: The test kit was fairly typical all the way around. The kick and toms had maple shells. The toms had coated 2-ply batter heads and clear single-ply resonant heads. The kick had a damped batter head and a ported front head, with a small pillow inside adding mild dampening. The snare was a cast aluminum model with die-cast hoops, having a coated single-ply batter head and a clear snare-side head.

Cymbals included a heavy 21" ride, an 18" China, a 16" thin crash, and a pair of fairly bright 14" hi-hats. Drum sizes were also typical: $4^{3}/_{4}$x14 snare, 22" kick, and toms ranging from 10" to 16". I would classify the drumset as a pro-level "rock" kit, with head and tuning choices made to yield a warm yet resonant sound from the kick and toms, and good cut and projection from the snare.

Room: The room was moderately sized at 24' x 32' with a 10' ceiling. It had typical studio acoustics: fairly ambient but well balanced, frequency-wise—not splashy, boomy, or out-of control. It's certainly livelier than some heavily treated rehearsal spaces, but not as bright or reflective as an empty garage or basement.

Playing volume: This one is harder to objectively quantify, so we captured SPL data at multiple playing levels, categorized as "quiet," "medium," "solid," and "maximum." (On a 1-to-10 scale, you can think of quiet as 3, medium as 5, solid as 7, and maximum as 10.)

Table 1
NOISE EXPOSURE TIME LIMITS: OSHA VS. NIOSH

dBA EXPOSURE LIMIT	OSHA PELs	NIOSH RELs
85	N/A	8 hrs.
90	8 hrs.	2 hrs. 31 min.
95	4 hrs.	47 min. 37 sec.
100	2 hrs.	15 min.
105	1 hr.	4 min. 43 sec.
110	30 min.	1 min. 29 sec.
115	15 min.	28 sec.

Results: To get a baseline, we started with the meter in front of the kit, five feet in front of the drums and five feet off the ground. This might approximate the exposure to someone in your band—say, a bass player—standing in close proximity to the drumset.

Right off the bat I tried to see how loud I could get, so I played a "max" single-stroke roll on the snare (all rimshots). This yielded 120 dB. NIOSH says you can listen to this for 9 seconds per day, as opposed to all of $7^{1}/_{2}$ minutes according to OSHA. Either way, you're not going to make it through a rehearsal or gig safely without protection. By the way, even though these are more "pulses" than a continuous sound, they're treated the same. OSHA says, "If the variations in noise level involve maxima at intervals of 1 second or less, it is to be considered continuous."

Regardless, this isn't typical playing for most of us, so we went to a "quiet" groove (kick/snare/hats) and registered 100 dB (15 minutes per NIOSH). The same groove at "medium" volume hit 105 dB (4 min., 43 sec.), and a "solid" groove with some tom fills and crashes generated 110 dB (1 min., 29 sec.).

Then we put the meter near where the drummer's ears are, and things really started to heat up. We averaged a 5-dB increase across the board due to the location change: Quiet, medium, and solid grooves were at 105, 110, and 115 dB, respectively. Then we looked at individual parts of the kit. The 21" ride cymbal generated 102 dB. (However, the bell of that ride got up to 112.) The kick registered 105 at the drummer's position—and interestingly enough, hit the same level from several feet in front. A good smack on the toms yielded 110 dB.

The 16" crash got to 111 dB, the hats (played hard, partially open) hit 117, and that rude 18" China generated 118 dB. (RELs on those cymbal values range from around a minute down to 15 seconds, by the way.) A "solid" rimshot generates 120 dB at your unprotected ears, and maximal effort on the snare hit just over 125 dB—which you're allowed to be exposed to for 3 seconds per day.

Now what about from the listener's point of view? After all, most musicians also spend a good amount of time listening to other musicians in fairly close proximity. Well, we backed off to twenty-five feet and took more readings. Things were a few dB down from the "in the band" location, and 5-10 dB down from the "behind the drums" spot, but there was still enough level to make hearing protection mandatory. The bottom line was we had no problem hitting between 105 and 110 dB while laying down a "solid" groove, and we could drive SPLs up to 116 dB (22 seconds) with maximal snareage.

We've consolidated the pertinent data into a chart (see Table 2) for reference.

Again, your SPL mileage

Table 2
DRUMSET SPLS AT VARYING DISTANCES
(All measurements "A" weighted, fast mode)

	DRUMMER'S EARS	5 FEET	25 FEET
QUIET GROOVE	105 dB	100 dB	96 dB
MEDIUM GROOVE	110 dB	105 dB	102 dB
SOLID GROOVE	115 dB	110 dB	108 dB
MAXIMUM (snare)	125 dB	120 dB	116 dB
Individual drumset components at the drummer's ears			
21" RIDE	102 dB		
21" RIDE (bell)	112 dB		
KICK	105 dB		
TOMS	110 dB		
16" CRASH	111 dB		
14" HATS (maximum)	117 dB		
18" CHINA (maximum)	118 dB		

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may vary if your room is more controlled. But there's one common misconception we need to clear up right now: The concept that if it "seems okay" and "doesn't bother you," it probably is okay. It definitely is *not* okay.

Going by even the oldest, most liberal standard (OSHA), you should only be exposed to even "medium" intensity drumming for 30 minutes per day without hearing protection. (And of course, current scientific research says that the exposure should really only be for a minute or so.) And it only gets worse from there, as the playing volume goes up, to say nothing about adding guitars, bass, stage monitors, etc. What's a drummer to do?

Hearing Protection Effectiveness

The obvious solution (besides quitting drums and taking up knitting) is the correct application of hearing protection. The good news is that there are lots of improvements in this area, so there's sure to be something that meets your sonic needs, budget, and personal ergonomics / comfort level.

Notice we said *correct* application. Frequently the end user doesn't get the full benefit of the product in question because it's not worn or used correctly. This is so prevalent that the regulators routinely "de-rate" the manufacturer's stated NRR (Noise Reduction Rating) for any given product.

How can hearing protection be worn incorrectly? Common problems include wearing muffs over glasses with prominent temple pieces, using foam plugs (or other formable earplugs) with the plug not inserted fully into the ear canal, or using hard plugs that have an imperfect fit. All of these conditions will allow unwanted sound to leak past the hearing protection, reducing the effectiveness of the protection.

1. The Metrosonics dB-2100 digital SPL meter is located to receive (and measure) the same sound level that the drummer's ears are exposed to. 2. Placing the meter at 5', to measure the exposure that someone sharing the stage might receive. 3. Locating the meter 25' from the drums, to record the SPLs that someone in the same room might receive from an un-miked drumkit. 4. The SPL meter captured the sound level from a max rimshot at the drummer's ears–yikes!

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With all this in mind, which type of hearing protection is best? Good question. We'll discuss that in a minute. But first we need to see what's currently on the market.

What's Available?

Hearing protection is divided by type into four broad categories: earmuffs, standard (formable) earplugs, custom molded earplugs, and semi-inserts. A good list of virtually everything currently on the market is available at the NIOSH Web site, under "hearing protector device compendium" (www2a.cdc.gov/hp-devices/hp_srchpg01.asp). Some highlights:

Earmuffs: There are over 250 different models currently available (!) from 24 different manufacturers. The big three here are Bilsom, Peltor, and North Safety Products. They all make standard (passive) earmuffs. Nothing much new in this category, except you can now find earmuffs in any color, weight, style, headband type, and cushion type imaginable. They all work on much the same principle, and all of them provide enough reduction (typical NRR of 20–30 dB) for our use, so if earmuffs work for you, select by comfort and price.

An exception to this is electronic earmuffs. Typically used to aid in communication on the job site or to provide music with isolation on the job via AM/FM radio, they range broadly in features and price. Traditionally these are not used in the music industry. There is one type, however, that I believe has some impressive drummer-friendly attributes. We'll take this as a separate category shortly.

Isolation headphones: This is a special subset of hearing protection, of interest to recording drummers, drummers who need to hear a click or prerecorded tracks onstage, and drummers who practice along to CDs. Basically headphones built into an isolating earmuff allow you to hear your headphone mix without it getting drowned out by the bleed from your drums. These are available from various manufacturers including Direct Sound (Extreme Isolation Headphones), Vic Firth (Stereo Isolation Headphones), Metrophones (featuring a built-in metronome), and GK Music (Ultraphones). I have experience with a couple of these—particularly the Ultraphones—and I can say that they're wonderful for two uses: trying to play along to CDs without going deaf from headphone level, and recording drummers and other musicians tracking in the same room as the drums.

In-ear monitors: Although constructed much differently, these are similar in concept to isolation headphones. They're either foam, soft plastic, or molded hard-plastic earplugs that have small speaker elements built in. Like iso-phones, they do two jobs: They let you monitor whatever mix is being fed to them, and they provide isolation from outside noise. The big benefit is that drummers in a live situation can hear the rest of the band without the damaging volume that a traditional floor monitor needs to be audible above the drums. *MD* reviewed the Shure line of personal monitors a couple of years ago, and they proved to be very useful at the tasks described above.

A couple of caveats: Even though in-ears can save your hearing, they also have the potential to damage your hearing should a high SPL signal somehow make its way into the transducers. This is due to the fact that they're placed in your ear canals, in extremely close proximity to your eardrums. Therefore you must have a limiter somewhere in the circuit upstream of the in-ear monitors. The Shure system we tested, for instance, had such a limiter built into the beltpack.

When going to in-ears, some drummers miss the bass response they get from traditional floor wedges. One answer is to use a floor wedge primarily for low frequency information, *and* in-ears. Of course, this negates one of the other benefits of in-ears—less gear to haul.

The other option is to bolt to your throne a transducer designed to provide you with the missing bass via mechanical conduction. These devices include the Clark Synthesis "Tactile Sound Monitor," the Guitammer "Buttkicker," and the Aura "Bass Shaker." We reviewed a version of the Buttkicker and found it to do everything the manufacturer claims. When combined with in-ears, it gives you a full-range music experience without exposing your ears to undue SPLs.

Formable earplugs: There are a few new things here. Traditional foam earplugs are still a great, inexpensive way to obtain good hearing protection, and they're now available in tons of colors and styles.

A new twist are cone-shaped foam plugs,

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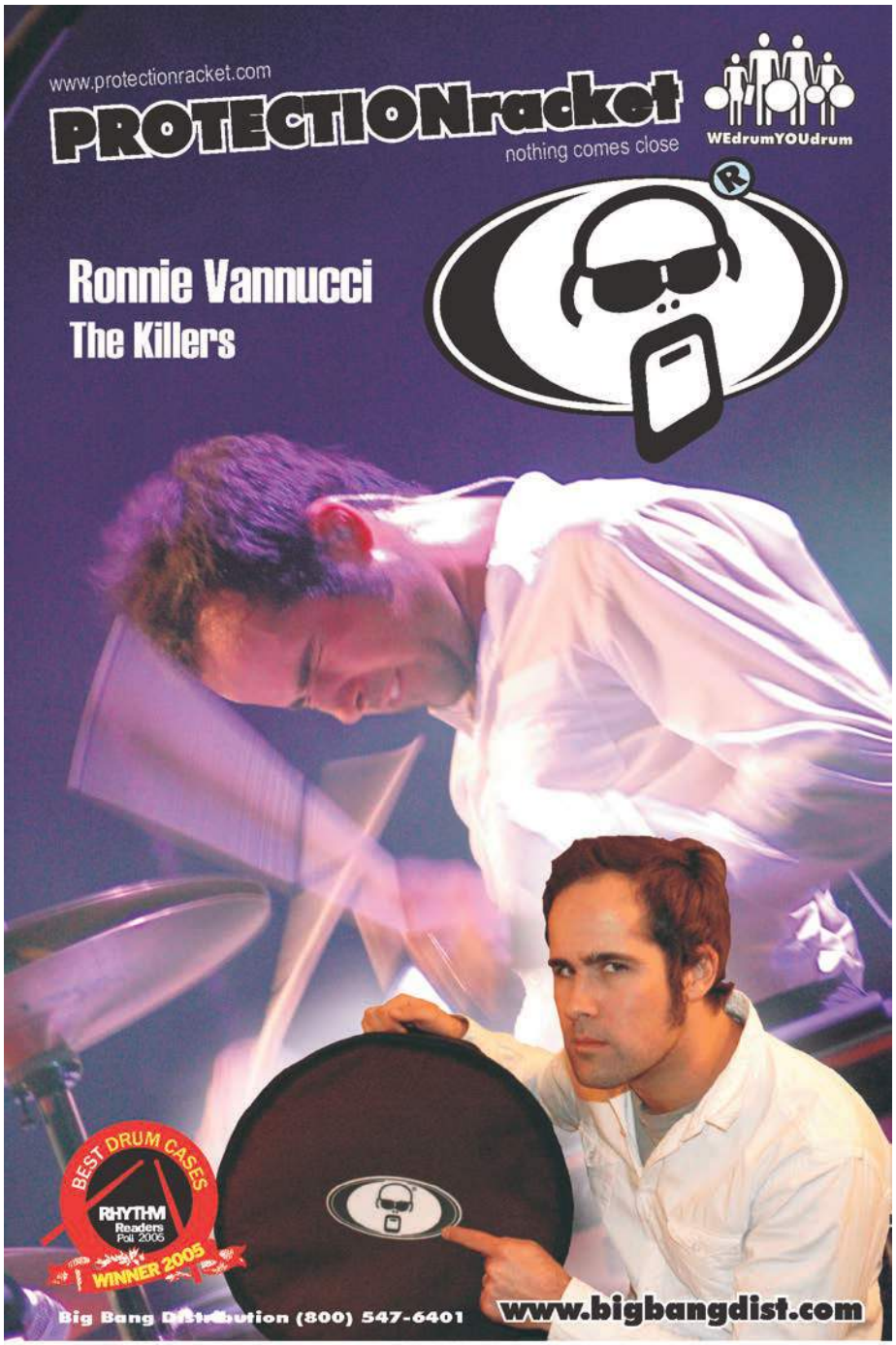


Save Your Ears!

such as the Pura-Cones and Traffic Cones, both by Moldex. These are hollowed out to obtain what the manufacturer calls a "low pressure cavity design," which means they place less pressure on your ear canal for greater comfort and longer wear times, and the base of the cone is also a "finger pocket" for easy insertion. The Pura-Cones have a NRR of 29, while the Traffic Cones, which are thinner-walled for even greater comfort, are rated at 23.

Also available are several new models of "flanged" earplugs, typically made of thermoplastic. These usually have three or four flanges of increasing diameter (looks like a cone from the side) with the idea being that at least one of the flanges, and probably more, will get a tight seal inside the ear canal. These have never seemed all that effective to me, and comparing the ratings on the NIOSH Web site, I finally understand why: They're typically rated in the low-to-mid 20s, while good foam plugs are usually in the high 20s to low 30s.

Also, in my experience, flanged plugs don't have the comfort level necessary for long periods of use. Now, one manufacturer states, "Three-flange construction allows a comfortable fit in 90% of human ears." Maybe I'm in that remaining 10%. So in spite of my experience, you might give them a try, especially since they're relatively inexpensive.

Molded earplugs: Basically, these are non-formable plugs that are custom-molded to fit your ears. Construction is generally silicone or vinyl. Buying these starts with getting a custom mold made of your outer ear and ear canal, which is typically done at your local audiologist's office. These molds are then sent off to a company, frequently a hearing aid manufacturer, which turns them into the final product.

For the highest NRR, the solid versions are best. They're available from several manufacturers, in almost limitless color options. And now special "vented" versions are available, such as the "dB Blocker Vented," from Custom Protect Ear. These have a small passage molded into the plug, for people who still need to be able to hear conversation. It has a subject fit NRR of 20 (as compared to 25 for their solid version of the same plug), which may still be enough for your use.

The real news here is the recent proliferation of custom molded plugs with built-in

filters that lower the SPL reaching your ears while still maintaining a fairly linear frequency response. Etymotic Research has long been making their ER-15 and ER-25 (and now ER-9) filters, and I've been a satisfied user of a pair of Westone custom molded earplugs fitted with the 15- and 25-dB filters for years. However, several other earmold labs can now also provide plugs with the same filters, including Sensaphonics, Earmold Design, Precision Laboratories, and Custom Protect Ear. As stated, the big benefit is that they provide protection without radically changing the quality (frequency balance) of the sound.

Relatively new on the scene are the Rock Stars custom plugs, from Pacific Coast Laboratories, Inc. These are available as a set, complete with a pair of custom molded plugs and six filter pairs of various attenuation (five designed for linear response and one solid for maximum attenuation).

And finally, for those who'd like to get an idea of whether local noise levels are getting into dangerous territory (but don't want or need a pro SPL meter), there's the Precision Labs Hearing Alarm. It's an inexpensive, simple little device with one button and three lights. To take a reading, you push the button and look at the lights. If the green light comes on, things are in the safe range (under 85 dB). Yellow (85–109 dB) means you should use protection for safe prolonged exposure. And red (110 dB and above) means protection is definitely required, even for brief exposure.

An Active Solution

Passive hearing protection is wonderful. It's simple, reliable, and generally inexpensive, and it works as far as protecting your hearing. But there are a few issues.

Most plugs and muffs can make it difficult to hear the quieter end of your dynamic range, rendering many ghost notes and such pretty much inaudible. And they can be a little problematic when rehearsing as a group, because you either have to take them off (or out) to talk between songs, or yell to communicate.

Both of these issues can be somewhat mitigated by using custom "musician's" plugs. But these can run between $150 and $200, and even then you have a fixed level of attenuation unless you swap filters. These issues are certainly not insurmountable, but there may be a more elegant solution.

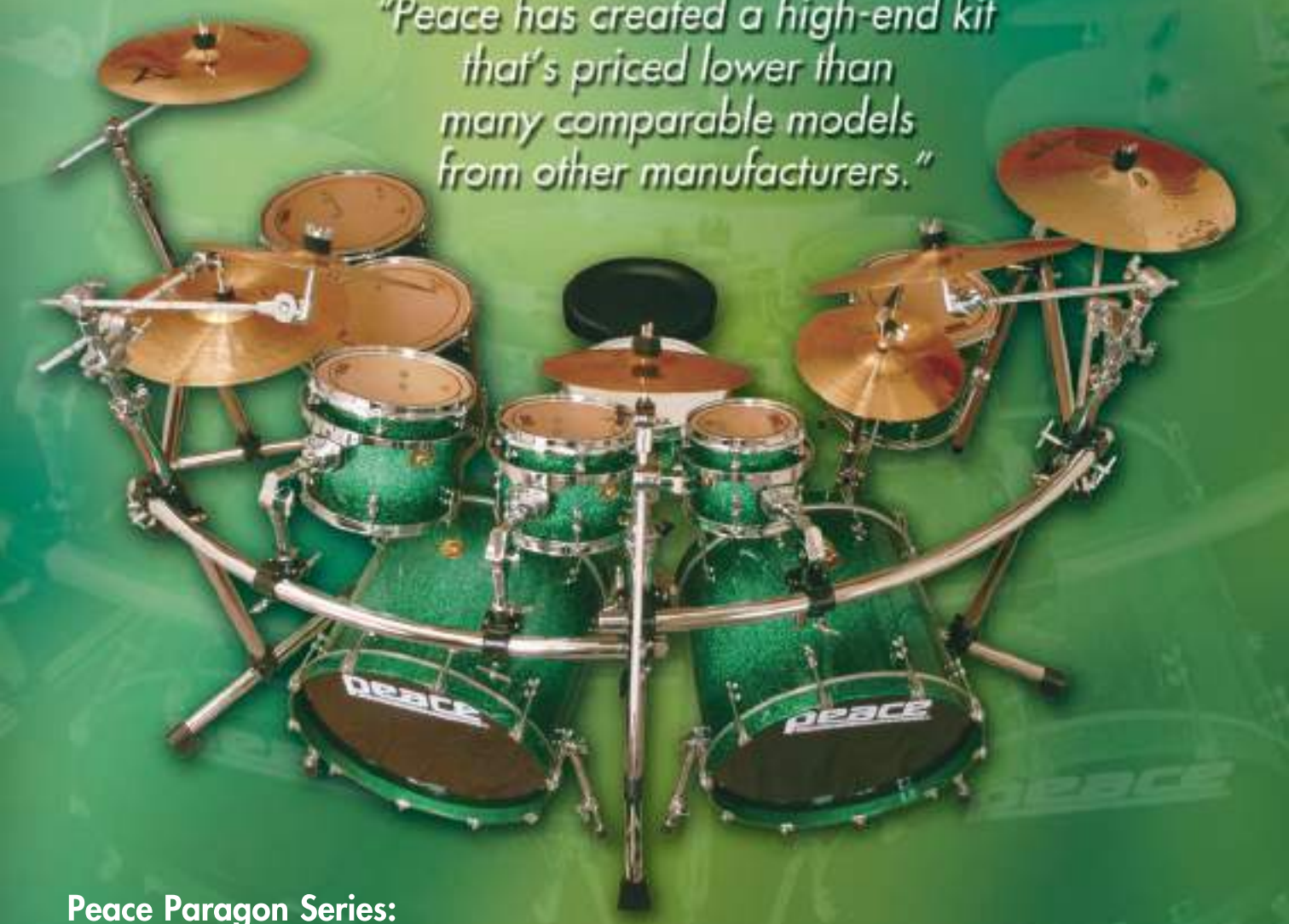
In a recording studio, for both monitoring the music and communicating between songs, the typical setup involves microphones and headphones. If you want serious hearing protection also, you're likely wearing isolation headphones vs. standard studio phones. And if you're a belt & suspenders guy and want to ensure that no loud sounds accidentally make their way into your phones, you'll want a limiter in the signal chain also.

Once everything's dialed in, it's a wonderful listening and playing experience: You can hear everything clearly, but nothing loud enough to hurt your ears can get through. And communication is easy. The mics in the room pick up your voice, and everyone can hear through their headphones. In a perfect world, it would be great to rehearse through such a system all the time. But the necessary equipment is costly and cumbersome, with several components to set up and adjust. But wait….

Imagine a pair of comfortable, low-profile earmuffs. Inside each ear cup is not only a driver (à la isolation phones), but a

"These drums really sing." Modern Drummer, August 2006

"Peace has created a high-end kit that's priced lower than many comparable models from other manufacturers."



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small headphone amplifier as well. And built onto the outside of the muffs are small microphones—one on each side, so you can hear in stereo and locate where sounds are coming from. And each ear (mic/amp/driver) has its own volume control. Finally, the system has a built-in hard limiter that instantaneously (within five milliseconds) reduces the sound to safe levels inside the ear cup, should there be a loud impulse outside the ear cup.

Well, such a system exists. Known as "Active, Level-Dependant" earmuffs, they're used where people need to be able to hear low-level sounds, but also need protection from high-level impulse sounds. Users include law enforcement tactical units and people engaged in training on firearms ranges, where there is a need to hear verbal range commands yet be protected from high SPL gunfire.

Curious about how this type of product would translate to the musical arena, I got a pair of Peltor Tactical 6-S electronic earmuffs and tried them in a practice situation. The short story is they're surprisingly effective, and have some interesting sonic attributes also. With the volume turned up, you can hear all the detailed stuff—stick bead on a cymbal, foot chicks on the hats, ghost strokes, etc. But when you smack the snare, for example, the volume is instantly reduced, then it comes back up as the sound subsides and the limiter eases up. It actually sounds pretty cool in use, and as the muffs' acoustic properties attenuate more in the high end than the bass, the resulting signature is warm and fat. And in rehearsals, they let you hear normal conversation easily, then clamp down again as soon as the loud stuff starts back up.

There are several models of active, level-dependant earmuffs available. I bought the Tactical 6-S because they were small, light, comfortable, and relatively inexpensive. (I found them online for $64.) And if you're concerned that they might let damaging noise levels through before the limiter goes to work, or that having the wrong volume setting can hurt you, here's what NIOSH has to say: "Active level-dependant earmuffs were found to react sufficiently fast to provide the same protection level as when they were turned off. The peak reduction was mostly unaffected by changes in the volume setting."

What's Best?

To get back to the earlier question, which type of hearing protection is best? My twelve-year-old son recently started his first band (think Green Day meets White Stripes), and my garage has become the band's headquarters. I'm cool with that. But the first thing I did was go to the local sporting goods store and buy five pair of inexpensive "shooters" earmuffs. Why? Because I didn't think these enthusiastic yet inexperienced musicians would reliably (or correctly) use foam plugs, and electronics wouldn't last long under their abuse. The muffs are easy off and on, they're rugged, and they work.

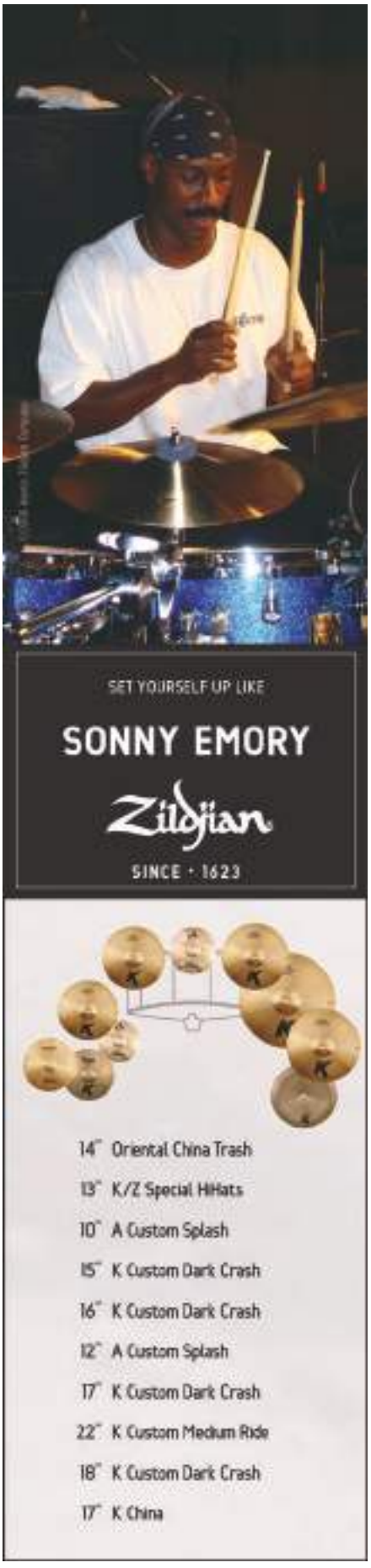
My point is, don't get hung up too much on theory. Instead, go with reality: The best hearing protection is one you'll actually use, on a consistent basis. (Far and away, most hearing damage isn't caused by wearing the "wrong" hearing protection for the task, but by not wearing *any* hearing protection.) Obviously you wouldn't want to use a 9-dB filter and listen to a band at 130 dB, but beyond that almost any "normal" protection will usually do the job.

After you've obeyed the fundamental rule of hearing protection (buy and *use* hearing protection!), you can take the time to experiment and decide what works best in different situations. I practice with the Peltor Tactical 6-S active, level-dependant earmuffs. I record with GK Ultraphones. I listen to live music with Westone custom plugs, typically with the 15-dB filters, sometimes the 25s. I usually perform with the same. I carry around a pair of cheap foam plugs, just in case. And I wear something (usually plugs, maybe muffs) when I mow the lawn or use loud power tools, because it all adds up.

Maybe I'm a hearing protection geek, but I've already experienced what overexposure can do. I'm attempting (successfully, according to my audiologist) to conserve the audio acuity I have left.

Musicians who play high-volume music for a number of years can pretty much be divided into two groups—those who wear hearing protection or those who wear hearing aids. Choose wisely.

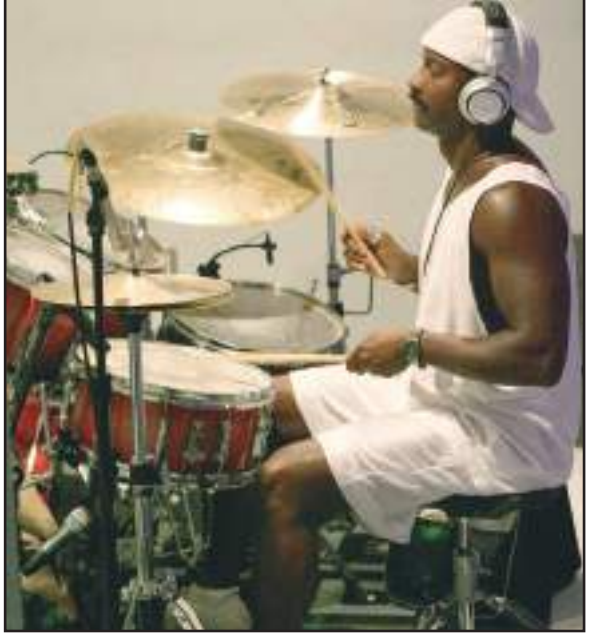
The author would like to thank Jo Forchione, Chip Stanley, and Jane Danks.



Sonny Emory's

Monumental Mechanics

Story and photos by Mike Haid



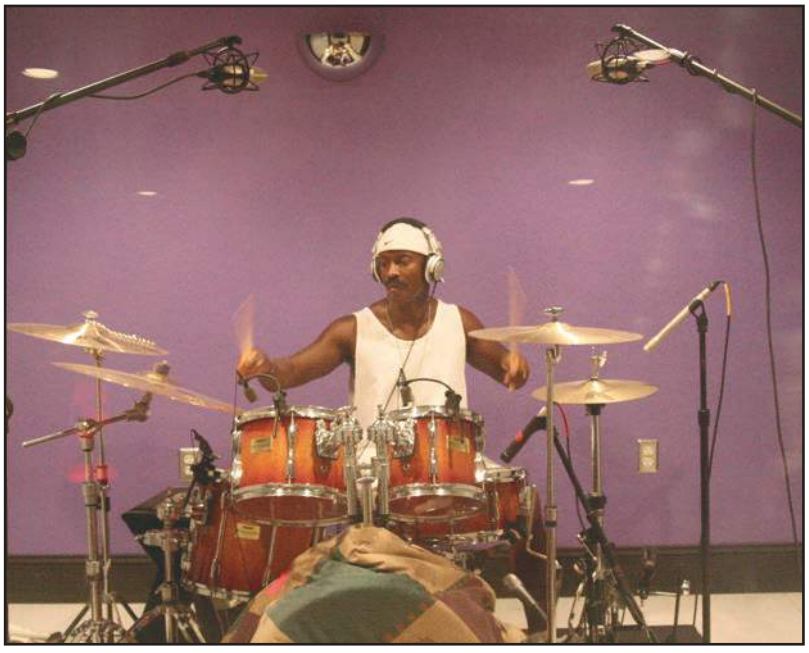
On the outskirts of Atlanta stands the world's largest exposed piece of granite, known as Stone Mountain. This amazing tourist attraction features a monumental carving (similar to Mt. Rushmore) of Confederate Civil War heroes Jefferson Davis, Stonewall Jackson, and Robert E. Lee. This upscale area is also home to larger-than-life drumming sensation Sonny Emory.

For over twenty years, Emory, an Atlanta native, has carved out a reputation of greatness with a who's who of pop superstars that includes Earth Wind & Fire, Bruce Hornsby, and Steely Dan. He's also a world-renowned clinician, educator, and master showman on stage.

In the quiet, suburban neighborhood where Emory resides, he has designed and built a recording/practice room to fit his personal needs in the basement/garage area of his three-story stucco home. "My main priority in building this room," Emory explains, "was to be able to get great drum tracks recorded here, and I feel that I've achieved that. It's small enough to not take up too much of my basement, but big enough to get the job done. I can comfortably fit a four-piece rhythm section in here, if necessary."

Emory's workspace is divided into two isolated rooms: a control room and a large drum booth. Each room is roughly 11x12, with 7-foot ceilings. The entire room is completely detached and isolated from the walls and foundation of the house, with a floating floor and lots of angled and uneven surfaces to deflect the sound waves and control the acoustics of each room.

Emory's fairly simple recording setup utilizes a Mac G4



running Pro Tools. The sound of his birch Yamaha Recording Custom drumkit is captured with Shure mics, which run directly into a Mackie mixing board. He monitors his recording with Hafler studio speaker cabinets.

Emory's sunburst kit, given to him by Yamaha "drum guru" Takashi "Hagi" Hagiwara in 1992, is the one and only kit that he has used in his studio. "In all these years, I've never had a problem getting great drum sounds from these drums," he claims. "This kit and my Yamaha signature series snare drum have been workhorses, and I've gotten many compliments on the drum sounds that come out of this room."

Emory uses a variety of Zildjian cymbals, Remo drumheads, and Yamaha hardware in his studio. His recording mics are all Shure, and his sticks are his own Zildjian signature-series model. Another important tool in Emory's studio is his vintage Akai MPC60 sampler, which has been modified internally with the MPC 3000 upgrades. He creates all of his sequences in the Akai unit and uses various other software programs to help record and create his own loops. Sonny also plays all of the keyboard parts on his solo projects, using Roland and Kurzweil electronic keyboards, along with several other sound source modules.

Emory has recorded most of the drum tracks for the projects that he's done over the past few years in his home studio, including Bruce Hornsby's *Halcyon Days*. "Bruce sent me the sound files, I loaded them into my system, recorded my parts, and sent them back to him," the drummer explains. "It makes it real easy for me to record this way, because I can take my time and get the tracks done at my convenience."

When it comes to woodshedding, Sonny will typically practice grooves along with his MPC60. He spends about ninety percent of his time writing and recording, and the other ten percent practicing. "It's becoming harder to practice at home now that my kids are getting older," says Emory. "My priority is to spend time with my family. I actually do most of my shedding when I'm on the road, because I've got more free time. But when I'm home I still try to get in at least an hour a day of hard practice. I've been studying the left-foot clave a lot, trying to incorporate it into more of a funk framework."

Sonny is currently working on a project with fellow Atlanta drummer Lil' John Roberts, creating dance grooves and club-style soundscapes. He continues to tour with Bette Midler and with Bruce Hornsby, as well as with his own group, State Of The Art.

<< Gear Box >>

Console
Mackie 32 x 8 x 2, 8-bus mixing console
Hafler Trans Nova monitors

Main Recording device: Pro Tools
Digi 001, Digi 002

Computer: Apple Power Mac G4
Lacie & Glyph hard drives
Mac 17" color monitor

Outboard Effects
1 DBX Pre-Amp
Plug-ins from Pro Tools for effects like reverbs, gates, etc.

Mics: Shure
Beta 52s, SM 98s, SM 57s, KSM 32s, SM 81s, SM 91s

Drums: Yamaha Recording Custom, birch in Sunburst finish
Universal toms: 8", 10", 12", 14", 16", and 18"
14x22 kick drum
Sonny Emory Signature snare drum ($5\frac{1}{2}$x14)
various other snares

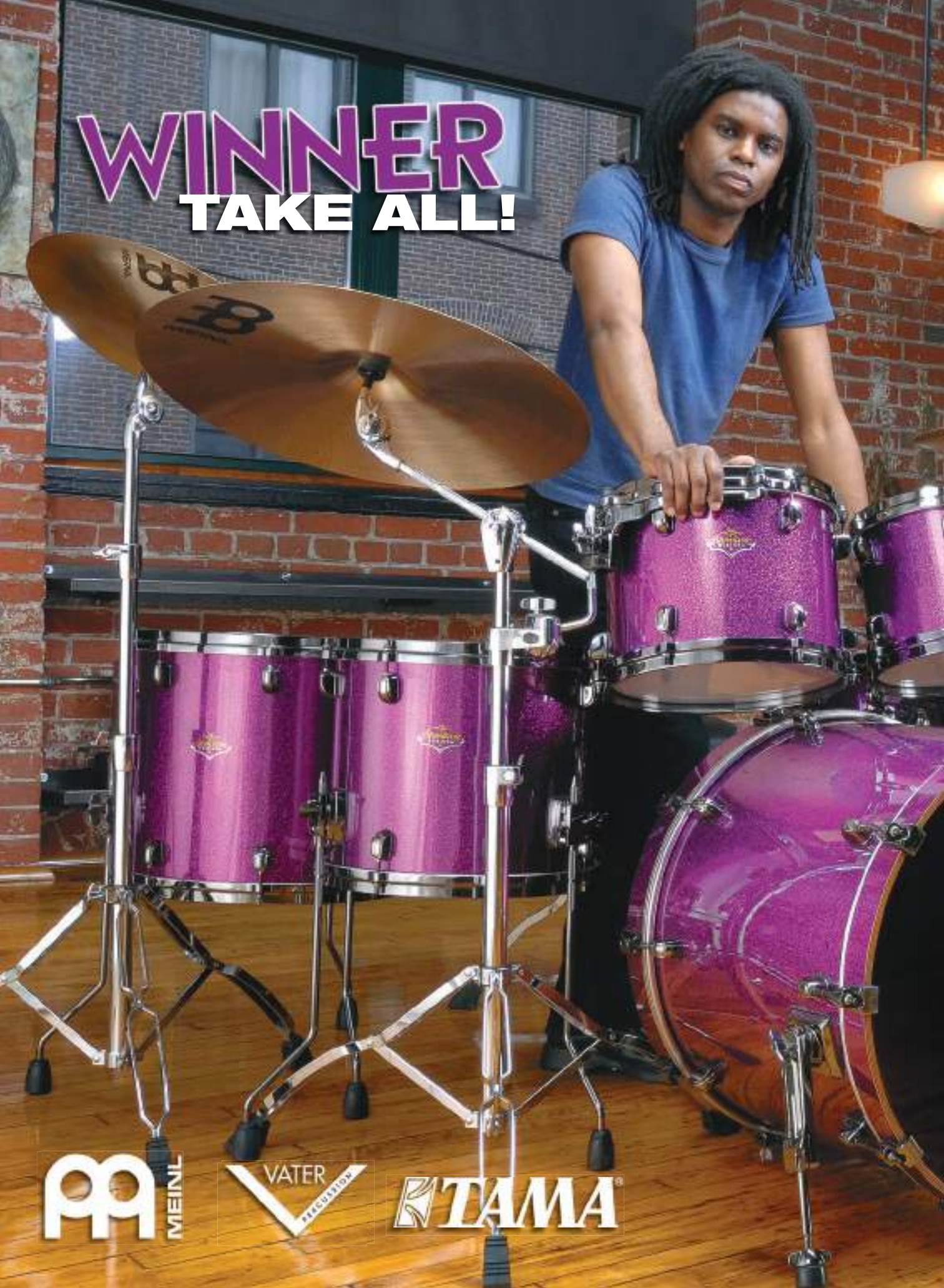
Cymbals: Zildjian
K Custom series, all sizes
Hybrid series in odd sizes: 17", 19", plus $13\frac{1}{4}$" hi-hats

Keyboard Rig
Akai MPC60 (upgraded with MPC 3000 software)
Kurzweil Model PC88MX

Keyboard
Roland keyboard controller model PC 200 MK II
Yamaha Motif rack mount unit
Roland JV-1080 with expansion
Akai S2000 sampler

Sound Modules
Reason, B4 Soft Synth, Absynth

Percussion
Toca, LP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MEINL
VATER PERCUSSION
TAMA

TAMA, MEINL, VATER & MODERN DRUMMER ARE TEAMING UP FOR A

BUBINGA+ GIVEAWAY

To help ***Rodney Holmes*** celebrate performing at ***PASIC 06*** and his great release, ***Twelve Months of October***, some of the companies whose gear Rodney plays and *Modern Drummer* magazine have joined in to give one very lucky winner a pile of great gear… cymbals from MEINL, sticks from VATER, all accompanying a complete TAMA Starclassic Bubinga set finished in Ultra Violet Sparkle. So why not join in the celebration? Read the rules, send in an entry and it could all be yours!

Over $9,000.00 Value!!!

TAMA (Shown with Rodney): 6pc Starclassic Bubinga Drum Kit In Ultra-Violet Sparkle, 8 x 10" Tom, 9 x 12" Tom, 12 x 14" Floor Tom, 14 x 16" Floor Tom, 18 x 22" Bass Drum, 5.5 x 14" Snare, 2 HTC77WN Roadpro Combination Stands, HC73BWN Roadpro Boom Stand, HC72WN Roadpro Straight Stand, HS70WN Roadpro snare stand, HH905 Iron Cobra Lever-Glide Hi-Hat Stand, HP900P Iron Cobra Bass Drum Pedal

MEINL: Byzance 22" Ping Ride, Byzance 16" Thin Crash, Byzance 10" Dry Splash, Byzance 16" China, Byzance 14" Dry Hi hats, 1 MCB22 22" Professional Cymbal Bag

VATER: 12 pair 5AW, 12 pair 5BW, 6 Slick Nut, 2 Buzz Kill, 1 Drink Holder, 1 Multi Pair Stick Holder, 1 pair Monster Brush, 1 pair Splashstick, 1 pair Splashstick Lite, 1 Vater Tee Shirt, 1 12" Chop Builder Split Surface Pad, 1 Vater Stick Bag

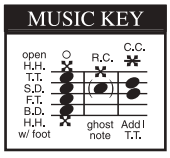
Consumer Disclosure: 1. To enter online, visit www.moderndrummer.com between the dates below and look for the Tama Contest button (one entry per household or email address) or send a 3.5" x 5.5" or 4" x 6" postcard with your name, address, email address, and telephone number to: MD/Tama Giveaway, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. 2. Enter as often as you wish via postcard, but each entry must be mailed separately. 3. ODDS OF WINNING DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 4. CONTEST BEGINS 12/1/06 AND ENDS 2/28/07. POSTCARDS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY 2/28/07 AND RECEIVED BY 3/5/07. 5. Grand Prize Drawing: Winner will be selected by random drawing on March 12, 2007. Winner will be notified by phone or email on or about March 16, 2007. 6. Employees and their immediate families of Modern Drummer, Tama, Meinl, Vater, and their affiliates are ineligible. 7. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. 8. Open to residents of the US and Canada, 18 years of age or older. Void in Quebec, Canada, and where prohibited by law. 9. Prize: one (1) winner will receive from Tama: one (1) Starclassic Bubinga Series drum kit consisting of: one (1) BT1008BNUVS tom, one (1) BT1209BNUVS tom, one (1) BF1412BNUVS tom, one (1) BF1614BNUVS floor tom, one (1) BB2218BNUVS bass drum, one (1) BS1455BNUVS snare, two (2) HTC77WN combination stands, one (1) HC73BWN boom stand, one (1) HC72WN straight stand, one (1) HH905 hi-hat stand, one HP900P bass drum pedal and one (1) HS70WN snare stand. Approximate retail value: $6,933.00. From Meinl: one package of Byzance cymbals consisting of: one (1) B22R, one (1) B10, one (1) B16CH, one (1) pair 14" Dry Hi-Hats; and one MCB22 22" bag. Approximate retail value: $2010.00 From Vater: one (1) package of sticks and accessories consisting of: Twelve (12) pairs 5AW sticks, Twelve (12) pairs 5BW sticks, six (6) Slick Nut, two (2) Buzz Kill, one (1) Drink Holder, one (1) Multi Pair Stick Holder, one (1) pair Monster Brush, one (1) pair Splashstick, one (1) pair Splashstick Lite, one (1) Vater T-Shirt, one (1) 12" Chop Builder Split Surface Pad, one (1) Vater Stick Bag. Approximate retail value: $431.84. Approximate total retail value of the Tama, Meinl and Vater components: $9,374.84. 10. Sponsored by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, (973) 239-4140. 12. This game subject to the complete Official Rules. For a copy of the complete Official Rules or the winner's name, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Modern Drummer Publications/Tama/Official Rules/Winners List, 12 Old Bridge Rd., Cedar Grove, NJ 07009.

To order a copy of *"Twelve Months Of October"* please visit www.rodneyholmes.com

Keith Moon's Craziest Licks

by Ed Breckenfeld

MUSIC KEY

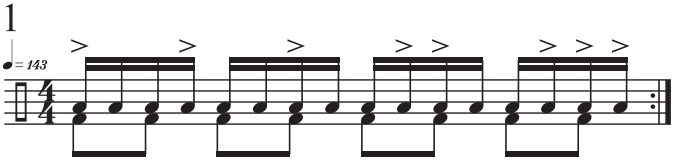


What if *you* were asked by The Who to fill the drum chair long vacated by one of the most unique drummers in rock music history? If you're Zak Starkey, you simply take the ideas you learned from Keith Moon when you were a boy, combine them with your own outstanding technique and control (along with your love of The Who and Moon's drumming), and you're good to go. For the rest of us, here's a smattering of Keith's coolest licks, in case *we* ever get the call.

"Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere" (1965)

With its wild extended instrumental bridge, this single was an early example of the "Manic Moon" approach to drumming. Keith flashes his Gene Krupa influence in this floor tom groove from the song's ending sequence. (2:24)

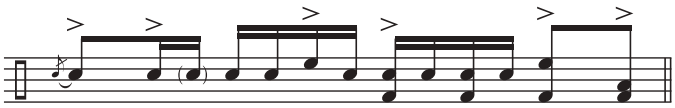
1



"Substitute" (1966)

By the time The Who recorded this hit, the improvisational nature of Moon's playing was fully developed. Here he twists the beat around, playing off of Pete Townshend's guitar rhythms in the song's final re-intro. Even at this early point in his career, Moon's signature 8th-note bass drum adds that familiar feeling of excitement to every drum break. (2:30)

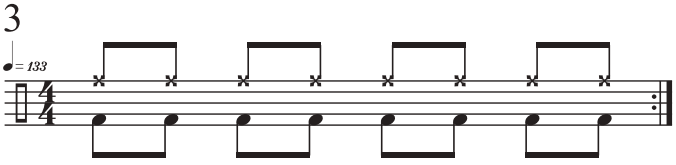
2



"I Can See For Miles" (*The Who Sell Out*, 1967)

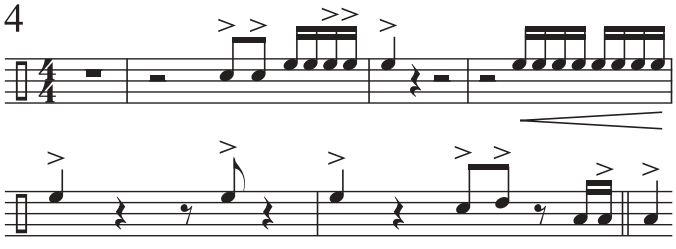
The popular view is that Moon's drumming consisted mostly of cymbal bashing and flurries of reckless tom fills. But Keith's flair for the dramatic could occasionally lead him in more controlled, composed directions. The powerful opening of this classic Who single was achieved by double-tracking the drums. In one channel, Moon lays a bed of continuous 8th notes on the ride and bass drum, splashing the cymbal on chord changes. (0:00)

3



In the other channel, Keith takes an almost orchestral approach, overdubbing tom and snare accents and crescendos to create a menacing mood for the intro. (0:00)

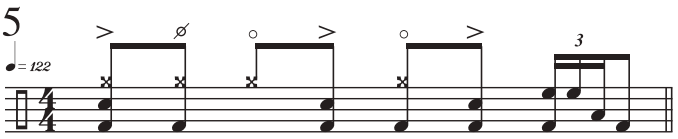
4



"Pinball Wizard" (Tommy, 1969)

This lick from the end of the bridge in "Pinball Wizard" perfectly encapsulates the appeal of Moon's layered approach to drum fills. He creates a quick crescendo (the gradually opening hi-hat) and decrescendo (the fall-down-the-stairs triplet ruff) while dropping offbeat snare accents over his bass drum pulse. (1:36)

5



"Happy Jack" (Live At Leeds, 1970)

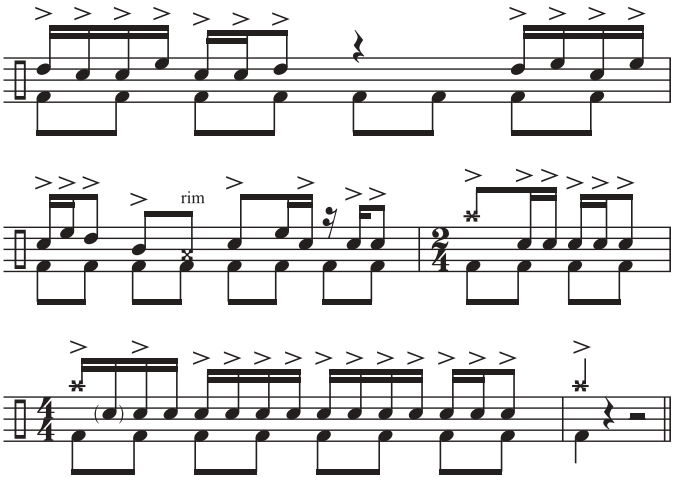
Here's the complete drum part for the first chorus of "Happy Jack" from one of rock's greatest live albums. Moon's explosive fills are made all the more impressive by their contrast to the song's sparse verse. (0:37)

6

"Won't Get Fooled Again" (*Who's Next*, 1971)

No look at Moon's drumming would be complete without his short solo at the end of the synthesizer breakdown in this classic track. Keith works a syncopated theme over his ubiquitous 8th-note kick drum pattern that builds in intensity before launching into a long 16th-note snare roll that explodes into Roger Daltrey's scream. This is one of rock's defining moments. (7:31)

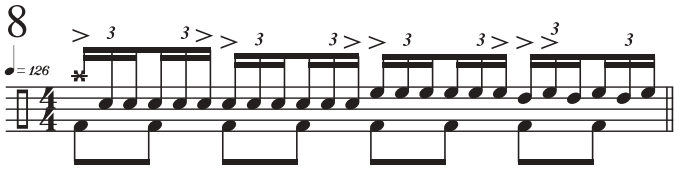
7



"The Punk And The Godfather" (*Quadrophenia*, 1973)

Moon's accents play a dual role in this 16th note–triplet fill. They preserve the pulse of the pattern, while also creating an ebb and flow to his sweep around the kit. The last beat of the fill contains another Moon-ism. Here he separates his hands between different drums during a roll to create a fuller sound. (1:38)

8



"Who Are You" (*Who Are You*, 1978)

Keith managed to squeeze some cool licks into his last album with The Who, despite the toll that his extreme lifestyle had begun to take on his playing. Moon's fills and 16th-note bass drums keep the energy going during the half-time verses of this title track. (5:02)

9

For more on Keith Moon's drumming, see my "Style & Analysis" in the September 2003 issue of *Modern Drummer*.

Live And Learn

Taking The Right Steps With Your Drumming

by Billy Ward

I have a little story I want to share with you. I'm going to talk about a drummer named "Joe." (That's not his real name.) Joe's been successfully drumming in his originals band for four years. One member of the band has a teensy bit of independent wealth from a trust fund. Others have been earning their living from the band's gigs while living within a tight budget. The reason for their self-sufficiency is not important. What counts is that they've achieved some regional success. In fact, they don't have to work day jobs.

Sure, the money is a little light sometimes. For example, when touring, they have to sleep in the van from time to time. But overall, the band is on their way to big success and recognition—the big paycheck! After all, they have fans who love the singer, and their songs are strong. Now all of that sacrifice is paying off, as the band has negotiated a record contract with a known label and they're now recording.

This is an enviable situation, right? I would've been happy to be in Joe's circumstance when I was twenty-two years old. But in reality, this opportunity has ended up *hurting* Joe. In fact, he may now quit drumming altogether. What in the world happened?

"So it happened: The axe fell on Joe. Now he has to decide if he can stomach performing songs in his band that another drummer recorded."

At the pre-production rehearsals for the band's record, the producer met the band and was there to help guide the rehearsals. This involves both parties getting to know each other. The producer needs to determine what potential this band has. What are its strengths? What are its weaknesses? How can this producer best do the job that's been promised to the label?

The reality of recording a contemporary pop album requires that the drums must be in time. Now, we all know the timing can be corrected if the producer has time to move the hits around during digital editing. Unfortunately, this particular producer isn't making enough money to put those fifteen hours of labor into something like this. He needs to finish each song within three days, from soup to nuts, mixed and done. Furthermore, he's had positive experiences with a certain pro drummer that he loves to hire. This particular drummer always nails it fast and has proven to be able to easily lay the kind of vibe that this music requires. After hearing the band at rehearsals, the producer realized he could *never* get the subtlety he needs from Joe, even if he had the time to "massage the time" of his tracks.

So it happened: The axe fell on Joe. His band is confused. They thought Joe was doing "okay," but this producer has earned their trust. He's the new boss and he's experienced, so Joe has to leave. The band has promised Joe that he's still a member and as such will receive the same royalties they had earlier promised. But Joe won't be on his very own record! He feels sick. Joe's now got to decide if he can stomach performing songs in *his* band that another drummer recorded. This is a situation that happens all too often.

With that in mind, here are a few suggestions that will help your career turn out better than Joe's.

Tape Yourself

I say this at every clinic or master class I give. Listen to the tape of your gig and put yourself through what you put your band through. The trick beyond taping yourself is to learn how to listen more harshly and more *realistically*.

One suggestion is to listen to the song from the singer's perspective. Imagine that *you're* the singer (minus the ego, hopefully). How do you sound singing? Did that darned drummer get in the way of anything? Does the song feel great? Is it groovin'?

Hitting the drum machine at tempo (quarter notes) while listening to a board tape is another way to make sure that your time isn't all over the shop. Yes, this is extreme (and in all fairness, I've never done this), but I know of one Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame artist's musical director who does this to make sure the drummer has good time.

One thing you can do if you aren't positive about your time is to get a digital device like the Groove Guide (www.drumperfect.com) that, when placed on your snare drum, reads the bpms (beats per minute) of each of your backbeats. A similar product is the Beat Bug (www.luglock.com).

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Be Contrary And Diversify

Joe never played drums in a school orchestra. In fact, he never even marched in his high school band. He felt that was beneath him. He was hanging out, listening to cool recordings with his band buddies. Why should he play that geeky John Phillips Sousa stuff and suffer through having to learn to read music and coordinate marching steps? Joe always stayed within the styles of music he liked and never strayed into areas that were different or more difficult.

I marched in my high school band and it taught me a ton about working with others in the percussion section. Our school didn't have a drum major (the guy with the whistle who signals to the band to change formation), so the lead drummer got that job. That job became mine. I had to play okay, I had to draw and follow little charts on my drumhead, and I had to blow the whistle to alert the band when to turn so as not to run into each other. It was kind of difficult, but it was a great experience.

I also played in a YMCA youth orchestra that was selected from young musicians across the country to perform at the Olympics. There were two other really good snare drummers in the drum section, and the three of us were in a wide-open (and somewhat hostile) competition for the two snare drum chairs. After all, the snare drum is the glamour position!

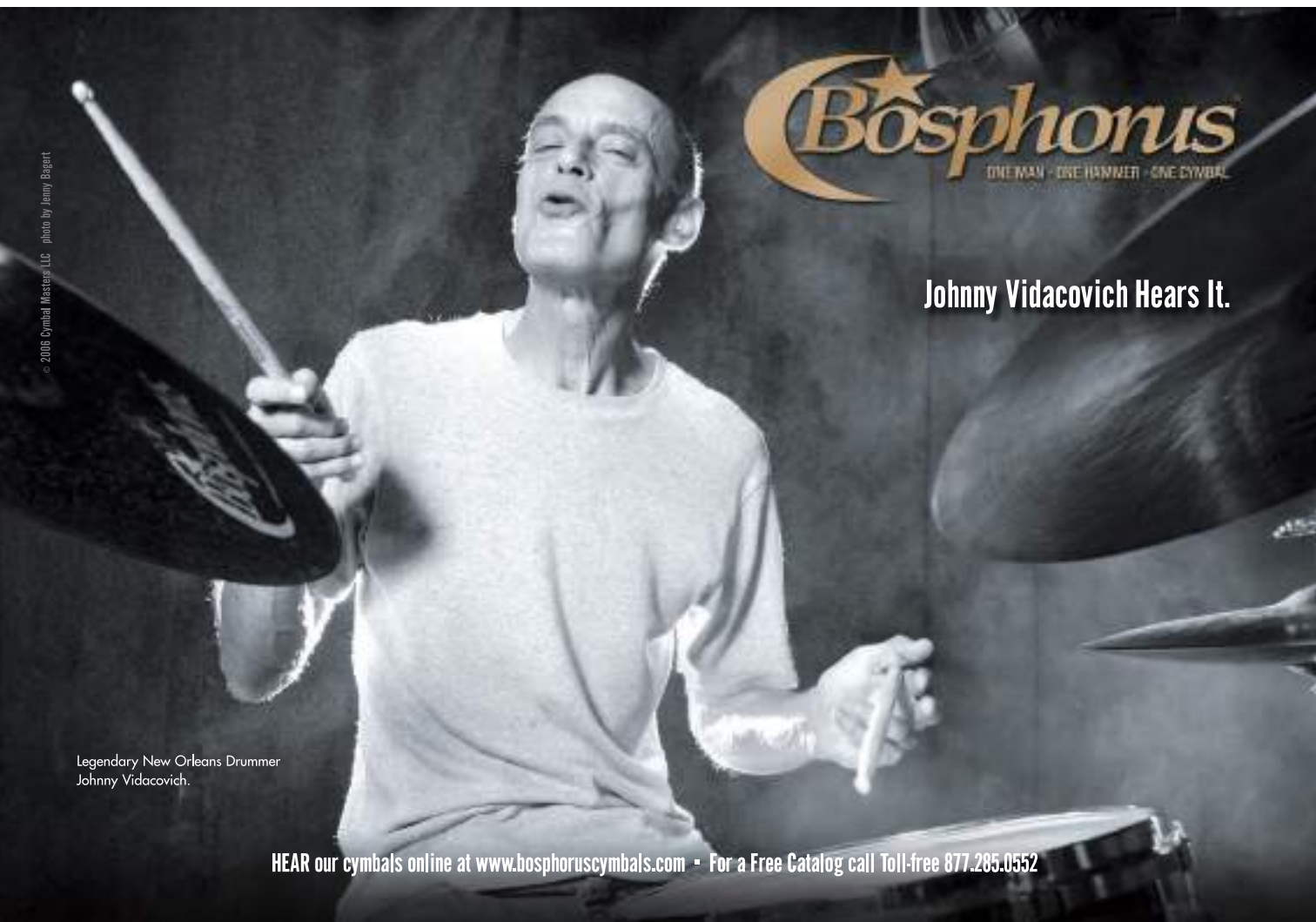
After rotating the three of us between snare drum and bass drum, the band director pulled me aside and told me that I was going to be playing the bass drum. I was crushed. But this guy was a talented band director. He told me that all three of us could play the snare drum parts just fine, but I was the only one who played the bass drum in a musical manner. He said he loved my tone and touch on the instrument and that I seemed to care about the band as an entity. This filled me with greater awe at the power and influence of a lovely bass drum playing "The Star Spangled Banner."

Is there a Greek restaurant in your area? Get a gig there! Those guys play in wacky time signatures, and it's fun—not to mention the food is good! Hate country & western music? Then get a country & western gig. Get the picture? Diversify and learn.

Wedding Gigs

Joe had never played a wedding gig. Wedding band gigs are a drag because you have to wear a tuxedo and lug your gear into a room where you'll probably be too loud for the duration of the gig. The songs are tired. In fact, they should be permanently retired! "Boogie Oogie," "Daddy's Little Girl," ad nauseum. Many times throughout the gig the other bandmembers are only halfway "there." They've played way too many wedding gigs and are burned out, having forgotten (or maybe never having learned) the finer disciplines of playing music.

So the pianist is rushing so much, he may be packing up and done while the last song is playing. The bassist is scanning the crowd for attractive women. The horn player is practicing his latest John Coltrane licks during a simple waltz. And, of course, the singer thinks she's Christina Aguilera. In the midst of this pandemonium, it's the drummer's job to play the music in such a way that makes people want to get up and dance their socks off. It can be easy to groove a band when everybody is great, but



what about when the time and intonation is horrible? Doing this work (and listening to tapes of some of the songs later) will make you a better drummer.

More years ago than I care to admit, Joey Baron, the great jazz drummer and one of my all-time favorites, used to play at the same catering hall in Brooklyn that I played. We were always comparing our meringues. Speaking of Latin, there's a whole lot to learn within the Latin music spectrum even if, like me, it's not your specialty. Trust me, it's great to have a couple of nasty mambos up your sleeve when wanting to punctuate a guitar solo.

Cover Bands

Cover-band gigs have a bit more glamour than wedding-band gigs in that you can still wear your normal clothing and you get to play somewhat hipper music for people who are roughly your own age. On the other hand, those gigs generally pay less money than wedding gigs. But the same challenges exist.

Can you groove your tail off on "Honky Tonk Women" and nail that vibe, even though you don't have a cowbell? (Try rimshots on your smallest tom for a cowbell sound.) Can you go from The Beatles' "I Saw Her Standing There" to Van Halen's "This Must Be Love" to Van Morrison's "Moondance"? To play in a cover band or wedding band, you have to have a general knowledge of the original music and, more specifically, the "vibe" of the drum parts. Expand your listening habits.

Every great musician I know is a walking and talking encyclopedia of music. If you have broad musical influences, when your original band has a mid-tempo shuffle song, you might be able to distinguish whether the drum part should be like "Everybody Wants To Rule The World" by Tears For Fears or "Spirit In The Sky" by Norman Greenbaum (a nasty-great shuffle).

What About Joe?

Joe, much to his credit, has not given up. He recently told me he bought a Groove Guide, and it's helping him with his timing. Before this all happened to him, he thought that he was *on* the click. But when watching the digital readout of the Groove Guide, he realized that he was far from accurate. So he's working on learning to coexist with a click—to play *with* it, as opposed to chasing it around each measure.

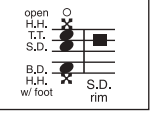
Joe decided to keep playing with his band on their live gigs, and he's improved enough that he may end up on some of the record. And who was "Joe"? He's a whole lot of drummers. Is he you?

Billy Ward is an in-demand session drummer and clinician. He's worked with Carly Simon, B.B. King, Robbie Robertson, Ace Frehley, John Patitucci, and Joan Osborne, among many others. His book, *Inside Out: Exploring The Mental Aspects Of Drumming*, is published by Modern Drummer Publications. And his DVD, *Big Time*, is considered a must-have. Billy can be reached through his Web site, www.billyward.com.

Giovanni's Groove

by David Garibaldi

MUSIC KEY



Several years ago, I had the privilege of being a member of Mickey Hart's Planet Drum alongside conguero and master percussionist Giovanni Hidalgo.

Actually, the band was full of master percussionists. In addition to Giovanni, we had Sikiru Adepoju on talking drum and Ustad Zakir Hussain on tabla. Plus we all played an assortment of other percussion besides our main instruments. It was a unique situation that featured three players who were, and are, among the best in the world.

We played together in Planet Drum for two years. For me, that time was like going to school. I learned something every day. And to be honest, the daily jam sessions were more fun than the gigs! I got to see first-hand how these people lived and worked, along with the dedication that each had towards his instrument.

The subject of this article is a drumset groove that Giovanni showed me one day. He was full of great ideas, and had some seriously funky groove concepts for the drumset. Example 1 is Giovanni's 4/4 pattern. It's an adaptation of something he played on congas, so the drumset interpretation reflects the sound of percussion.

The basic sounds are:

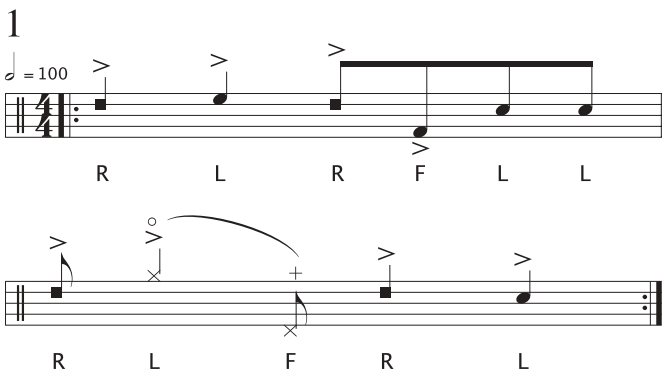
Right Hand = the rim of the snare drum (not a sidestick—actually strike the rim) or the side of the floor tom
Left Hand = small tom, hi-hat, or snare drum
Right Foot = bass drum
Left Foot = closed hi-hat with the foot

Other sounds can be substituted once the original concept is mastered. Also, keep in mind that I'm showing you how *I* think about this groove. It may seem confusing, but this is how my mind works when organizing these things. If you put my explanation together with the visual of the written exercises, then everything will become much clearer. Learn the basic concept, and then live with it until it becomes part of your vocabulary.

I hear Example 1 as 2-3 rumba clave, but I hear the converted groove (Example 2) as 3-2 rumba clave. Some of you might hear them differently.

Example 1 is Giovanni's basic 4/4 groove. It's a two-measure phrase, because it's based on clave. The pulse is set to the half note at 100 bpm. The sticking is also included.

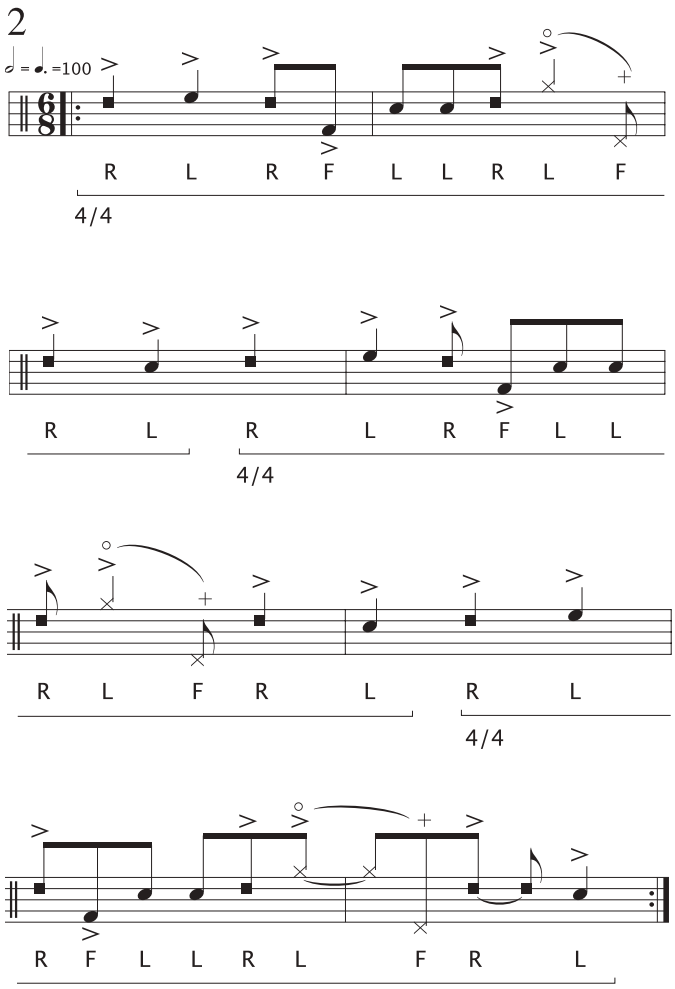
As you're working on this groove, count in a way that's comfortable. Even though it's not written with 16th notes, I count the 8th notes as 16ths (1e&a 2e&a 3e&a 4e&a) and view the two-measure phrase as one bar of 4/4 (thinking of the half note as one quarter note).



In Example 2, I take Giovanni's idea and convert it to 6/8. Now the basic pulse becomes the dotted quarter note, where the half note (four 8th notes) is now a dotted quarter note (three 8th notes). The tempo remains the same at 100 bpm.

The brackets show how the 4/4 groove lays over the 6/8. The 4/4 groove moves through the 6/8 three times before you're back to where you started on beat 1. The sticking is also included.

Again, counting is very important and will help you play each exercise accurately. Count in a way that's comfortable. I keep the 4/4 feeling going by combining two measures of 6/8 to create one measure of 12/8. I count the triplets as 1&a 2&a 3&a 4&a.

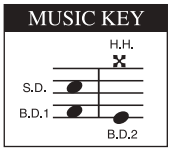


Learn Example 1 first. Then once things are comfortable, continue to Example 2. Practice with a click to help with the transition from 8th notes to triplets. And, as always, take your time. Patience plays a big part in the art of drumming. Enjoy!

David Garibaldi is the award-winning drummer with legendary funk band Tower Of Power.

Double-Stroke Hands, Single-Stroke Feet

by Bobby Rondinelli



The following exercises are designed to get your feet playing 32nd notes faster and more evenly in a relatively short period of time. In each of these examples, the hands are playing double strokes (RRLL) and the feet are playing singles (RLRL).

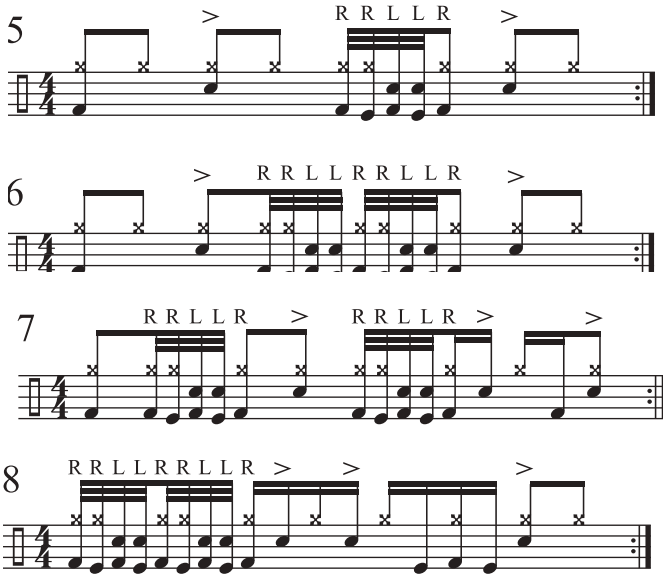
Getting used to playing doubles with your hands while your feet are playing singles can be quite challenging. But it's worth the time invested. I use doubles with the hands because most people can play a double-stroke roll more evenly, and for longer periods of time, than they can play singles. The feet are also good followers. If you play a rhythm with your hands, then you can follow along with your feet. Start the rolls with the right hand and right foot first, and then alternate the stickings.

Example 2 has a five-stroke roll in the hands with a five-stroke ruff in the feet. This exercise will help you gain control in short spurts, while also teaching you to lead with either foot. Start slowly. Accuracy is more important than speed.

In Example 3, we have a nine-stroke roll in the hands and a nine-stroke ruff in the feet. When it starts to lock in, increase the speed.

Example 4 is an open roll in the hands with the feet playing singles. Try this one (as well as the other exercises) at different tempos.

Playing grooves that incorporate fives or nines with the feet can be difficult. A good way to even them out is to play double-stroke rolls on top, as in Examples 5–8.



This concept will work with all duple- and triplet-based rolls. Our feet are more ambidextrous than our hands. We favor our strong hand in daily activities—we open doors, comb our hair, and write with our strong hand. But even if we always start with the same foot when we walk, the other one is right behind. Just remember to start slowly and be sure that you can mentally hear the rhythms before you play them. Then the feet are sure to follow.

Bobby Rondinelli is an acknowledged master of double bass. He co-wrote the book *The Encyclopedia Of Double Bass* in 2000. Bobby's worked with Rainbow, Black Sabbath, Aerosmith, and Blue Öyster Cult, among others. He is currently a member of The Lizards.

To see Bobby demonstrate these examples, log on to **www.thelizardswebsite.com/moderndrummer.htm.**

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Style & Analysis

Tony Williams

Part 3: Dynamics

by Jeremy Brown

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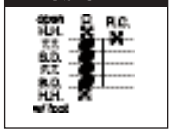


Dynamics are a fundamental aspect of any drummer's sound. Much of the energy that jazz great Tony Williams exuded with The Miles Davis Quintet came from his wide dynamic range.

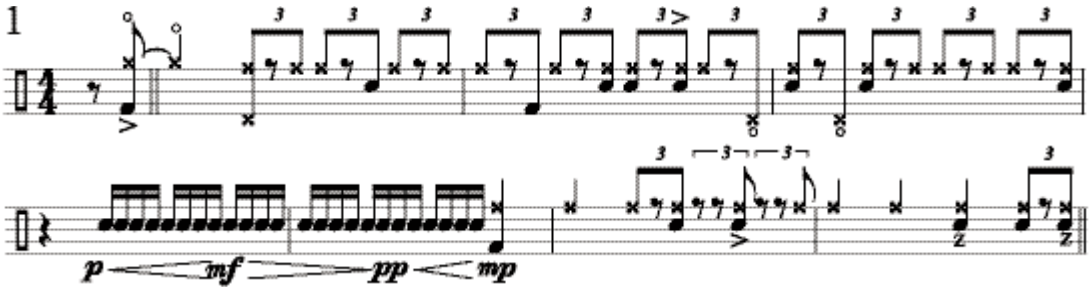
Tony derived his dynamic concepts in part from Art Blakey's explosive drumming in the '50s and early '60s. Blakey used dynamics as an important element in his band's arrangements. For examples, check out "Moanin'" from the Jazz Messengers album of the same name, and "Dat Dere" and "Chess Players" from *The Big Beat*. Art also used press rolls and single-stroke rolls that went from extremely soft to extremely loud (often ending with a loud cymbal crash / bass drum hit) to ignite the soloists or prepare for the next musical event.

An important difference between Blakey and Tony's use of dynamics is their level of predictability. While Art's dynamics usually moved from low to high within one roll, Tony was totally unpredictable.

One of Tony's most characteristic dynamic statements stems from Blakey's snare drum rolls. At a medium swing tempo, Tony often played consecutive 16th notes on the snare drum. This 16th-note figure serves a similar purpose as Art's single-stroke roll, but with very different dynamics. Williams explored more variation in his dynamic movement than Blakey. Sometimes, Tony would hold the volume at the same level and then let the intensity die, or he would create a floating sensation by subtly increasing and decreasing his dynamics.

"Autumn Leaves"

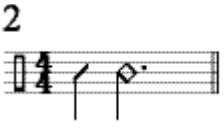
In Miles Davis's recording of "Autumn Leaves" from *Seven Steps: The Complete Columbia Recordings 1963-1964*, Tony plays 16th notes at the end of the saxophone solo that slightly increase in dynamic level, creating the expectation of a loud ending crash. Instead, the drummer brings the volume down for the beginning of Herbie Hancock's piano solo. Since George Coleman extends his sax solo into the first few bars of the piano chorus, Tony plays this figure three measures after the beginning of the form. (5:32)



"All Of You"

On Miles' various recordings of the jazz standard "All Of You," particular events in the arrangement prompt Tony to increase or decrease his dynamic level. During the extended tag that follows one or two choruses of each solo, the drummer either completely stops playing, breaks up the feel, or plays driving swing with prodding fills, depending on the intensity of the soloist.

Another interesting event in the tune's arrangement is this simple rhythm-section figure that occurs on the sixteenth measure of the form. (5:32)



On the version of "All Of You" from *My Funny Valentine*, Tony leads towards this landmark figure by changing his level of activity and dynamics. Most often, the band's volume gradually decreases before or after the arrival of the figure, while Tony's activity increases. The following three examples illustrate interesting ways that he treats the rhythm-section hit. (5:06, 8:22, 9:15)

"The Theme"

Some of Tony's most dynamic playing occurs on a recording of "The Theme," from *The Complete Live At The Plugged Nickel*. He opens Wayne Shorter's saxophone solo with a floating snare drum roll that dissolves into the ride cymbal pattern. (0:00–0:34)

Later in the solo, Tony plays distinctive hi-hat ideas that disperse into a snare roll, and then the roll diminishes into a standard ride pattern. From there, the ride cymbal decrescendos, while a conga-like tom beat begins to "answer" the ride. The cymbal gradually disappears, and the tom takes over as the sole time-keeping voice. A few measures later, Tony moves back to his ride cymbal for the remainder of the solo. (2:52)

The examples presented here are only a short list of several surprising, sensitive, and sometimes confusing dynamic events in the Mile Davis Quintet's library of recordings in the 1960s. With his fresh use of dynamics, metric modulation, and rudimental vocabulary, Tony Williams opened the doors to new possibilities of expression for drummers in all genres.

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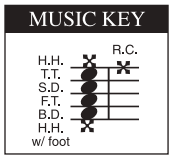
Dividing Double Strokes

How To Get Started

by Joel Rothman



The double-stroke roll (RRLL) is a rudiment that sounds great when played around the drumset. Many of today's top drummers—such as Jack DeJohnette, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Dave Weckl—use this sound extensively in their grooves and fills. Other players, like Dennis Chambers and Louie Bellson, have expanded on the double-stroke roll by dividing the strokes of each hand between different instruments. The following group of exercises is a clear and simple step-by-step approach that will help you develop this skill by moving the doubles between the small tom and snare drum.

Dividing The Right-Hand Double

If you've never attempted to divide double strokes between two drums, Example 1 may look simple. But when you try to play it with some speed, you'll see that it's not so easy. My advice is to start slowly. As you begin to feel more comfortable and confident, gradually increase the tempo. Also, keep your sticks high.

1

Once you can play Example 1 with some speed, try applying it to a one-bar rock break.

2

Now try it with a jazz groove.

3

Dividing The Left-Hand Double

For most players, the next exercise—dividing the left-hand double between the small tom and snare—is much more difficult than dividing the right-hand double. Once you've developed speed and control with Example 4, you'll be ready for the next step.

4

Dividing Right- And Left-Hand Doubles

The following exercise can be somewhat daunting. But slow and steady practice over a period of time will definitely bring results. Plus, hearing the exciting sound that's produced by dividing right- and left-hand doubles between two drums will make all the practice worthwhile.

5

Now try using Example 5 as a one-bar break. Here's the fill used with a rock beat.

6

Now try it in a swing context.

7

This entire concept can be extended by dividing the right-hand double between the floor tom and snare drum, as shown in the final two exercises. Good luck!

8

9

Joel Rothman was born in Brooklyn, New York. He wrote and published his first drum book over fifty years ago at the age of sixteen. Since then, he has written over one hundred drum instruction books, which sell worldwide through his company, J R Publications. He can be contacted at joelrothman@btconnect.com.

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Magic Drums

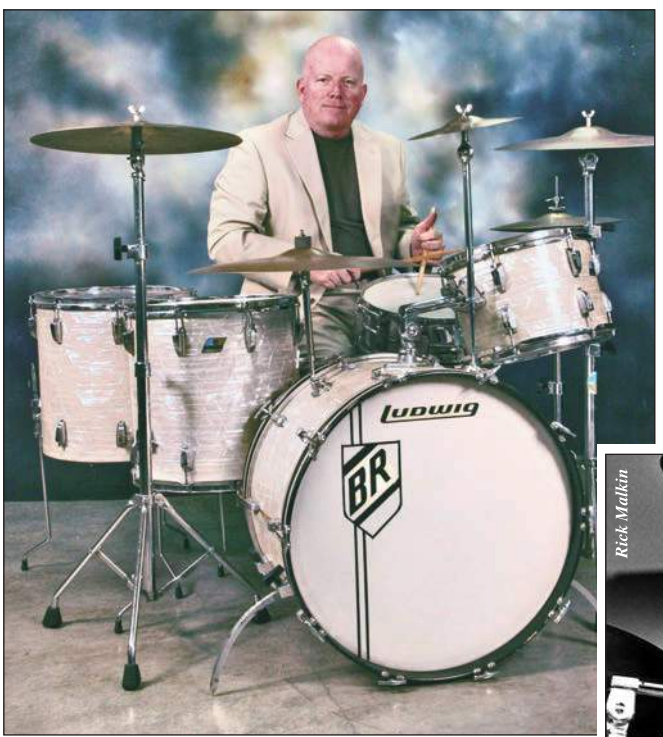
Johnny Carson, Buddy Rich...And Me

by Don Sweeney

The following story is about a set of drums that was given to me by Johnny Carson, and that had been given to *him* by his great friend Buddy Rich. I refer to those drums as "The Magic Drums." Every time I play them, I play differently—and better. Other drummers have said the same thing about the drumset, even before they learned of its history. The story goes like this....

On November 15, 1984, Buddy Rich was making one of his numerous appearances on *The Tonight Show,* where I worked behind the scenes for twenty years. On this particular visit, he seemed like a kid as he told Ed Shaughnessy and me about a set of 1934 Slingerland Radio King drums he had just purchased. Buddy had an endorsement deal to play Ludwig drums exclusively, but he would sometimes do things to indicate that he was unhappy with the way the Ludwig folks were treating him at the time.

Buddy told me, "You know, I think I once owned these same Radio Kings." When I laughed, he said, "No, I'm serious! I think I just bought back one of my old sets." He boasted about the way the set sounded, about the tone, and about the hardware.



I told Buddy that I, too, had a set of Slingerland drums that I was quite proud of. "Everywhere I play with my drums, I get compliments from people who say how shiny they are or how nice they sound."

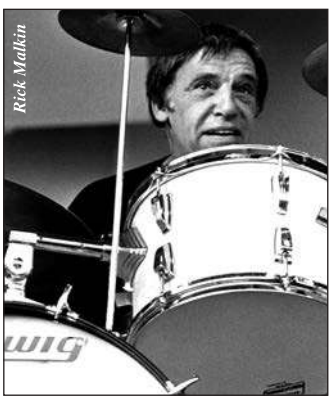
The following weekend, Buddy was playing at the Universal Amphitheater in LA, opening for Frank Sinatra. He invited me to come see the show on Saturday night, but I had a party to play in Anaheim. I asked if I could come on Sunday instead, and Buddy said it was no problem.

A Grim Discovery

On Saturday night, after my gig, I made the mistake of leaving my drums in my van overnight while it was parked in the carport of my apartment. On Sunday morning, I discovered that someone had broken into the van and taken my drums.

All day Sunday I was in shock. I moped around and stared out the window in disbelief, half hoping I would discover it was all just a bad dream. Eventually, I remembered that I was supposed to go see Buddy that night. I wasn't going to go, but my wife, Cathy, coaxed me into it. She said it would be good for me to get out and take my mind off our loss.

When I encountered Buddy backstage, I said, "Remember that Slingerland set I was boasting about the other day? It was stolen from my van last night." Buddy winced in sympathy.


Rick Malkin

Just then, a hush enveloped the backstage area. I was about to ask Buddy why everyone got so quiet, but he made a sign for me not to talk. Frank Sinatra had entered the area, and he demanded quiet backstage. Buddy knew we shouldn't continue

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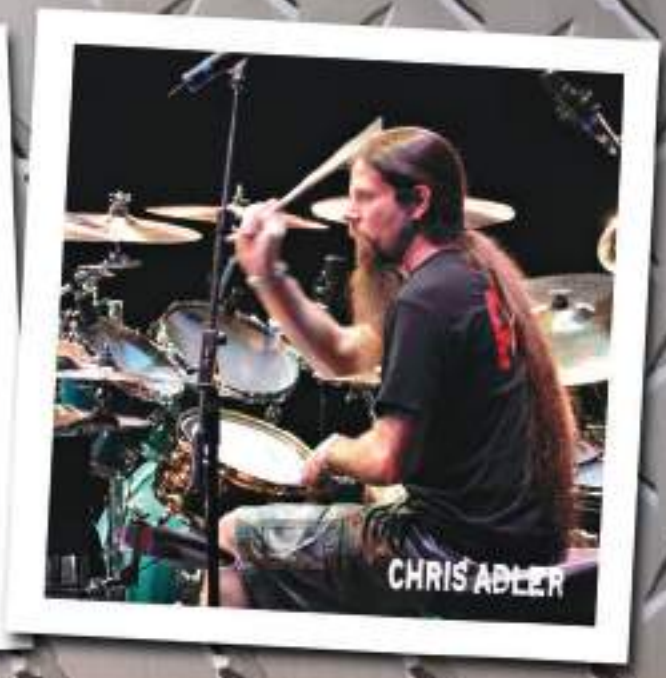

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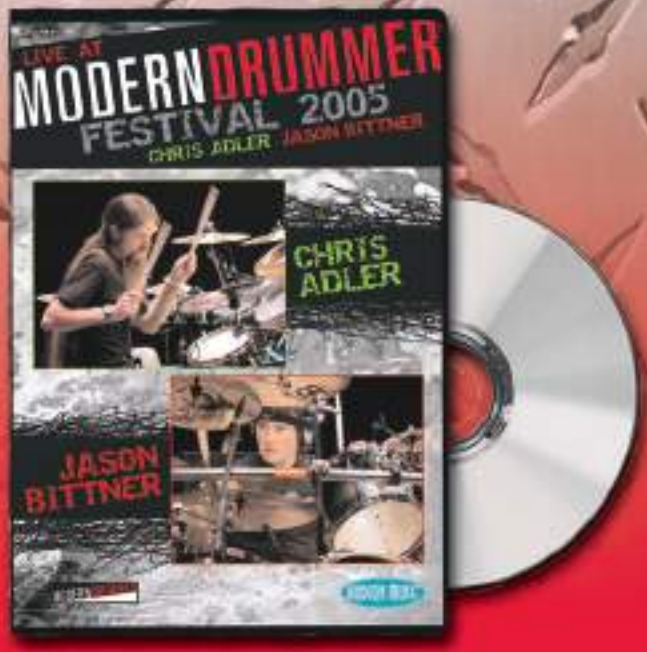

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our conversation around Sinatra, so he motioned for me to follow him onto the stage, where the bandstand was in place for the concert. Then he asked me to help him try to get a better sound out of his snare drum—which, he said, he was about to give up on. While I watched, he climbed behind the drums and played a couple of quick rimshots and rolls on the snare.

"What can you do about that?" he asked. I reached for the adjustment screw on the drum and loosened his snares. "Try it now," I said.

Buddy whacked the drum a couple of times, and then a big smile lit up his face. "Yeah," he said. "How'd you do that?"

When I told Buddy that my drums had been stolen, he winced in sympathy.

Now, any drummer knows that if the snares are too tight, a snare drum will emit a dry, flat sound. I couldn't believe that "The World's Greatest Drummer" didn't know that. I'd heard stories that Buddy never tuned his drums, and always had a drum technician do it for him. Either he couldn't be bothered, or he actually didn't know how to do it. If he didn't, it was no wonder he'd spent a lifetime searching for the ultimate snare drum sound. But I wasn't going to tell *him* that.

So I gave Buddy the same answer he once gave the queen of England when she asked him how he could play the drums so fast: "Just lucky, I guess." Buddy recognized the line, pointed his drumstick at me, and winked.

That night, I watched the concert from the wings. It was a fabulous experience that helped me to forget, at least for a while, about my stolen drums.

A Generous Offer

The next week, I bumped into Johnny Carson on his way to work at *The Tonight Show*. He said he'd heard about my stolen drums. To my great surprise, he said: "I have a drumset out at my beach house. Why don't you make arrangements with Dru (his assistant) to come out and pick them up?"

I drove out to Johnny's Malibu house that weekend. Dru led me to the beach-level living room, where the drums were set up near a sliding glass door. The salt air had been hard on them. Every chrome part was pitted, and the cymbals were as green as the Statue Of Liberty. A pair of red rubber-handled brushes was sitting on the floor tom, where Johnny must have left them the last time he sat at the set. When I lifted the brushes, the rusty tattoo caused by exposure to the damp ocean air remained on the skin of the drum. That stain is still there today.

This set had quite a history. The Ludwig Drum Company had brought it to *The Tonight Show* for one of Buddy's appearances. It was a brand-new set that had never been played. Ludwig executives were on hand to see that the drums were set up for Buddy, and that both the Ludwig and Buddy Rich logos were displayed on camera. They tightened the drumheads but didn't bother to fine-tune them. A new set of drums always needs to be pampered. The heads have to be tightened, played on, and re-tightened quite a bit before they're ready to be played on national television.

When Buddy was presented with the new drumset, he didn't exactly jump for joy. Drum companies offer beginner, deluxe, and super-deluxe models. This set was Ludwig's middle model, and Buddy knew it. So after the show, Buddy left the drumset behind as a gift to Johnny Carson. And now those same drums were being passed on to me.

I packed up the drums in cases we found in a storage house next door. When I got them home, I scrubbed them clean. The pitted chrome parts looked better after a couple of applications of chrome polish and plenty of elbow grease.

Back On The Job

A few weeks later, my band was asked to play at the annual *Tonight Show* party at the Beverly Hills Hotel. When I was able to talk to Johnny on a break, I mentioned that I was playing the drums he'd loaned to me.

"Those are my drums from the beach house?" he said in amazement. "What did you do to them? They look great."

I'd ordered a new drumset that was to arrive in a few weeks, so I offered to return Johnny's drums as soon as I got the new ones. Johnny then said, "Why don't you just keep these drums as a second set, as a gift from me?" I accepted, gratefully.

From that time on, whenever Buddy Rich played on *The Tonight Show*, I would bring in those Ludwig drums and set them up for him. I'd make note of anything that Buddy would adjust, so that when he came back the next time, I'd have the drums exactly the way he liked them.

At a later *Tonight Show* rehearsal for one of Buddy's appearances, Ed Shaughnessy and I were standing off to the side of the bandstand, watching Buddy play. While Buddy waited for Doc to count the band in, Shaughnessy caught Buddy's attention and said, "Hey, Buddy, those are the drums you gave to Carson and Carson gave to Sweeney."

I wondered if Buddy might want the drums back, now that they were all tuned up and broken in. Thankfully, Buddy remembered about my drums being stolen, and replied, "Oh yeah." Pausing for a moment as he looked over the drums, he added, "Well, he can keep 'em."

I still have those Ludwig drums under lock and key. Once in a while, on special occasions, I take them out and play them. When I do, I feel that I can play better than usual. I like to think that the spirit of Buddy Rich is still alive in those drums, and that some of his drum solos are still echoing through the skins to me.

Don Sweeney worked on *The Tonight Show* for twenty years. He started as assistant to bandleader Doc Severinsen, worked his way up to music supervisor, and stayed on with the show when Jay Leno took over. Don is also an accomplished drummer, as well as a former student of longtime *Tonight Show* drummer Ed Shaughnessy. This story is excerpted from Don's book, *Backstage At The Tonight Show, From Johnny Carson To Jay Leno* (Taylor Trade Publications). Used with permission.

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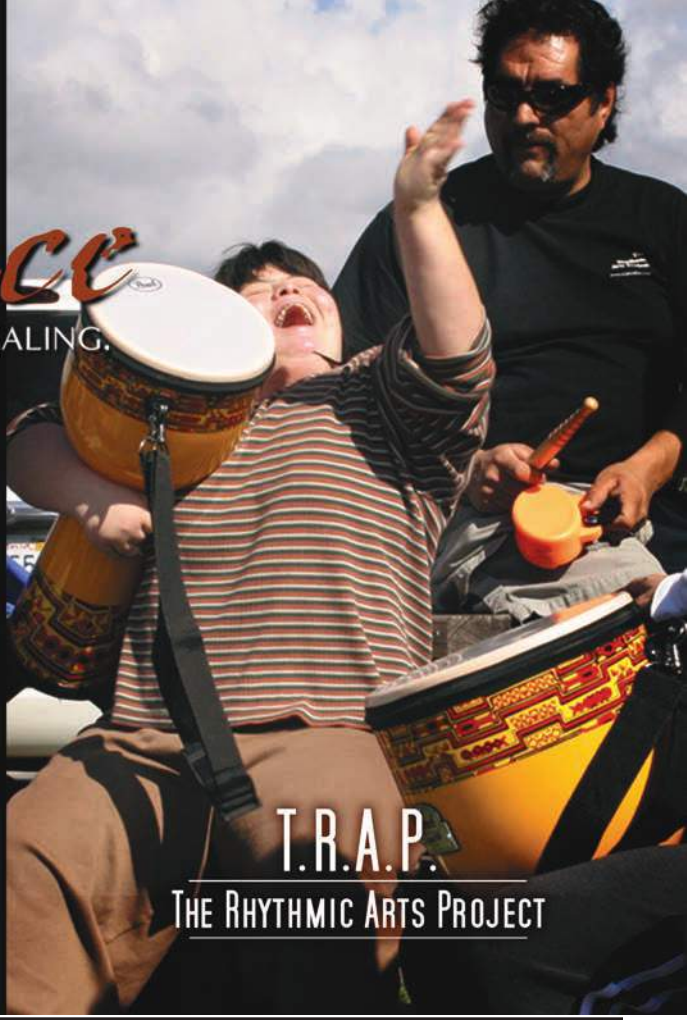

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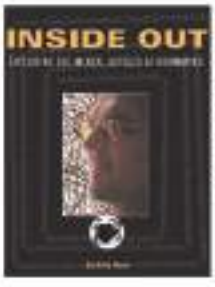

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Become One With The Click

Five Ways To Master Playing With Click Tracks

by Mark Feldman

In today's drumming world, playing with a click should be looked at as a job requirement. You absolutely *must* have this skill in your back pocket if you plan to set foot in a studio as a pro. And these days you may also be asked to play with a click—or loops, or a sequencer—in live situations.

This all may sound obvious. But many drummers still don't take the development of this essential skill seriously. You may be surprised to find out that many of your competitors can't cut it with a click. The following anecdotes will tell you why I thought this article might be helpful to you.

Nailing The Groove

I recently went to audition for a great rap-rock band. Before we started to play, they told me that all they were interested in from a drummer was groove and pocket playing. As if to reinforce that point, the rickety old drumkit in their basement studio consisted of just a bass drum, a snare drum, a hi-hat, and a box to sit on. During the audition, one of the songs we played was accompanied by a sequenced backing track, with the click pounding in my ears via a pair of closed headphones. I locked into the click and just tried to play solid time, with a lot of feel.

Here's where I got the surprise. These guys were knocked out by the fact that I could play along to a click! They told me that no drummer they had auditioned up to that point could keep in time with the click when they tried to play that song.

Another recent playing experience confirmed the notion that your facility with a click will get you noticed. I did a jingle session at a small downtown studio, and we recorded using a click (of course). On my way out, the house engineer asked for my number, specifically because, as he said: "It's hard to find drummers who can really rock to the click." That engineer has been recommending me for gigs ever since. Great for me...but what a surprise.

Point made? So, now the question is: How do you develop the ability to play with a click? Below are five suggestions.

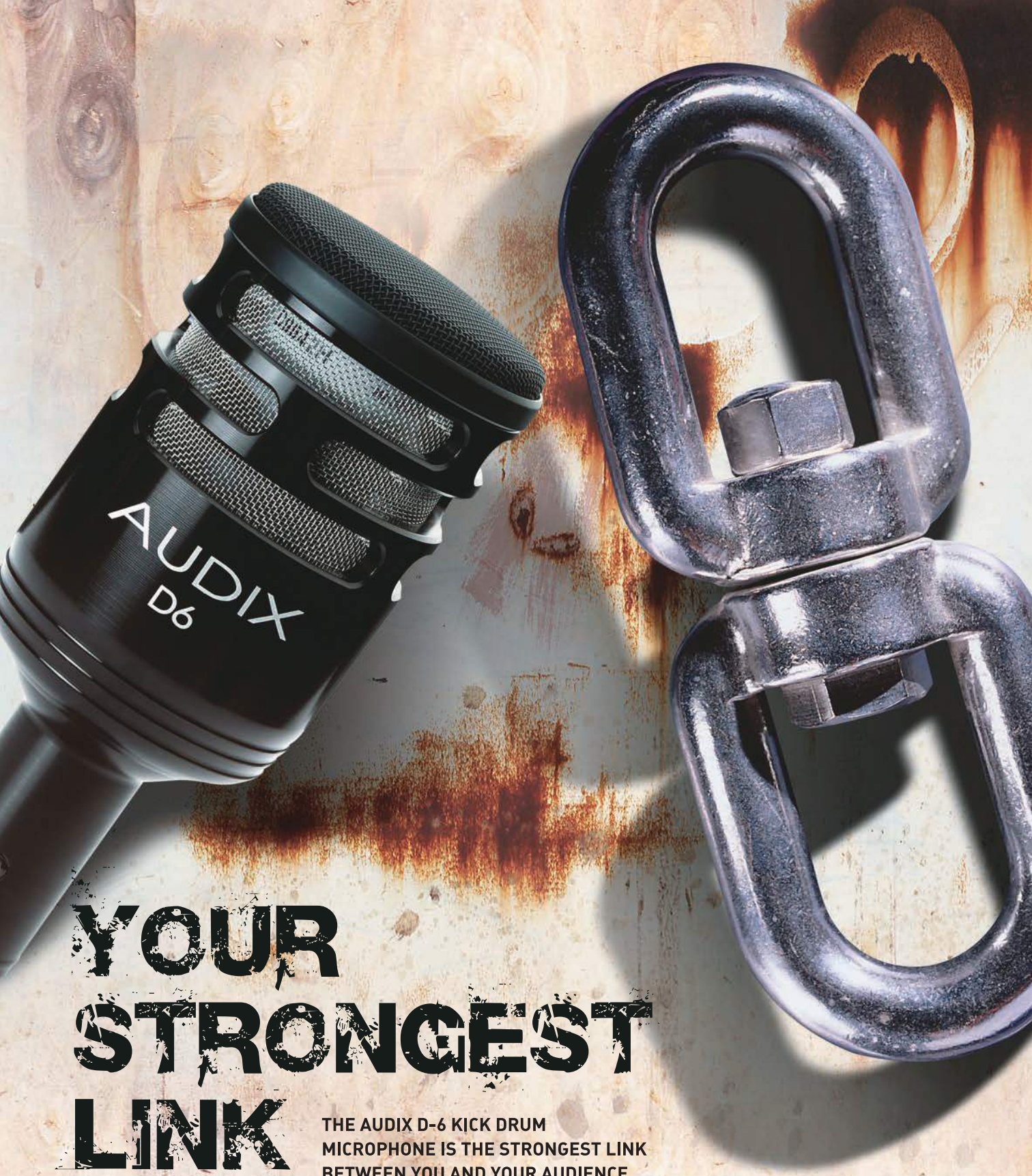
1. Practice With A Click Constantly

When you sit behind your drumkit or practice pad, much of your practicing should be done with a metronome. Whether you're working on new grooves or just working on technique, use your metronome religiously. If you're working on soloing, or even on a new lick, you can practice along with a click, increasing the tempo from slower to faster as you gain proficiency. Start today, and make this a habit.

2. Use Play-Along CDs

Take advantage of the wealth of great educational material available today. There are play-alongs for every possible style that effectively allow you to "play with" some of the heaviest musicians in the business. You can play along with John Scofield on guitar and Matthew Garrison on bass using the Dennis Chambers

Illustration by Joe King



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Developing a sense of confidence in your internal clock will help your drumming in many ways—not the least of which is, you'll get more gigs.

play-along book/CD packages, or you can play with a straight-ahead jazz combo using some of John Riley's book/CDs. You can use the *Turn It Up & Lay It Down* packages, or you can go to www.dreammusician.com and download real hit tracks that have been mixed without drums.

3. Talking Metronomes

I discovered this while playing my Roland electronic kit, and man, is it great. Instead of just a repeating sound, you can play along to a voice that counts for you! I've found this especially useful when you want to work on phrasing that takes you over the bar line. You can work on new ideas, with complete confidence that you won't lose your place. After a while, you'll internalize the phrase to the point where you can use it at will. This is a fun way to work on developing your facility with the click. (For more suggestions for working with a metronome, see Paul Wells' excellent *Concepts* article from last month's *MD*.)

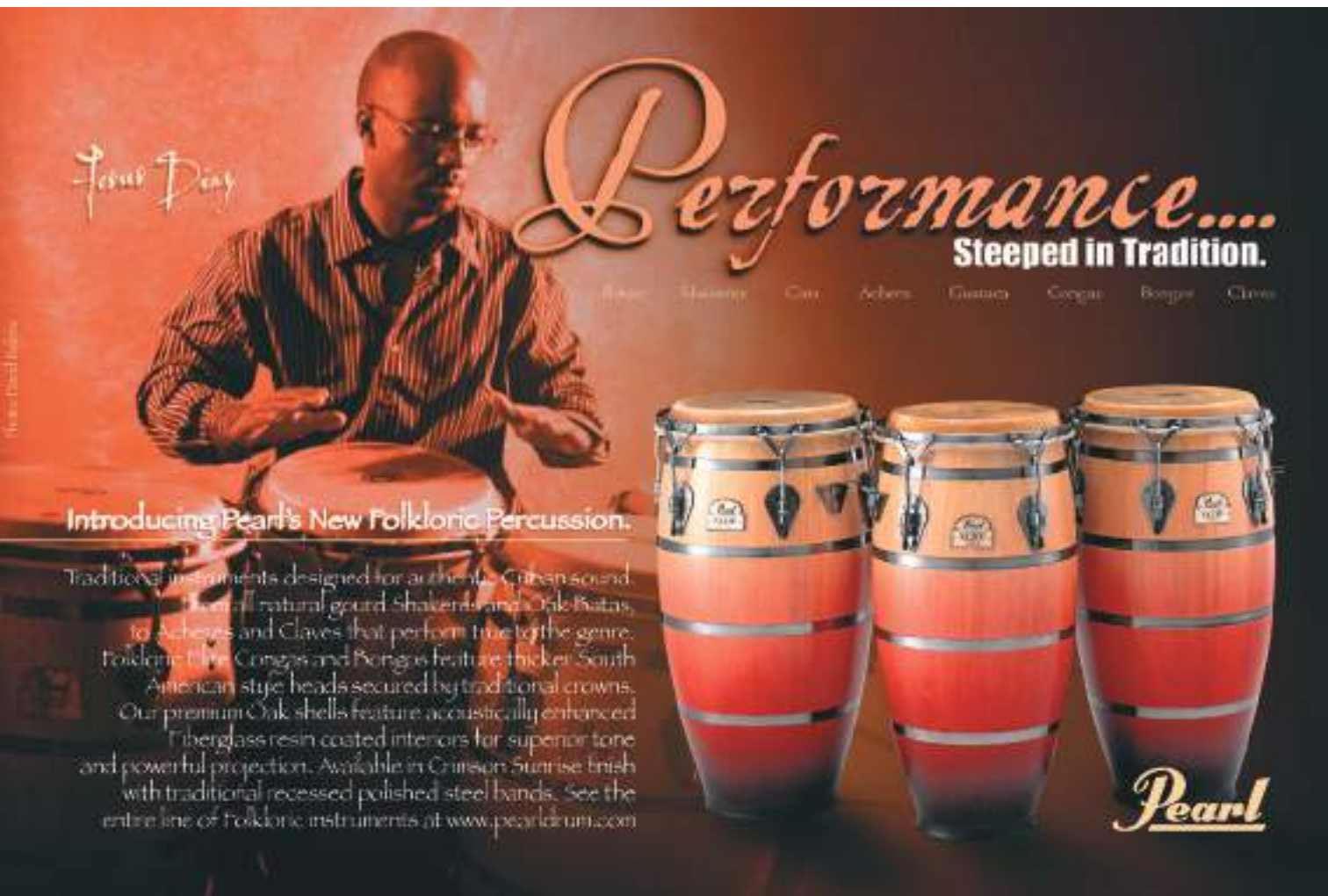
4. Practice While Walking Or Driving

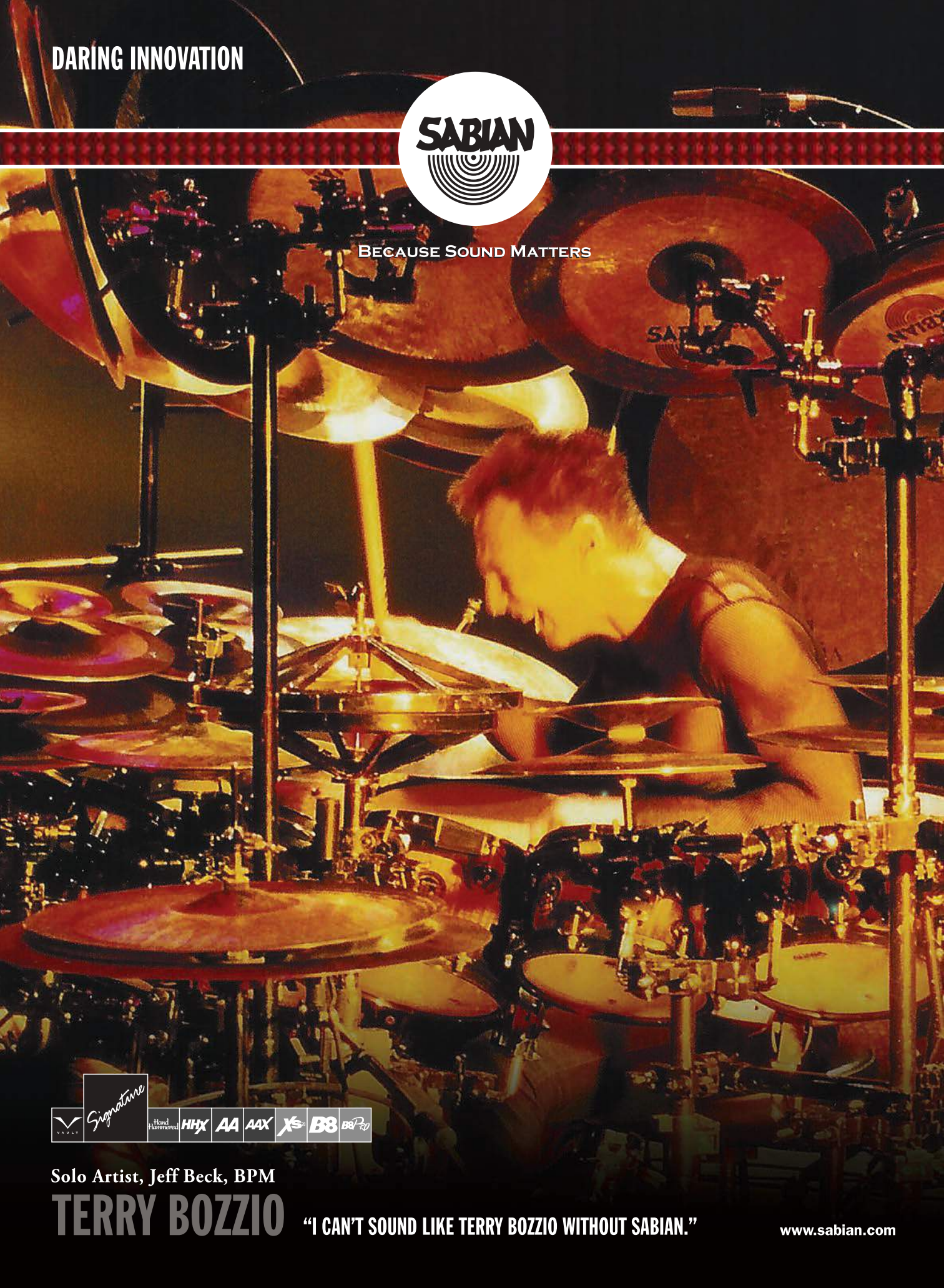
If you're driving, turn on your car stereo and play some tunes. Tap your finger, sing the drumbeat, or just count out loud along with the music. Now, turn the volume on the stereo all the way down while continuing to keep time. Do this for a few measures and then turn the volume back up. Are you still in time with the track? Keep working on this until you're consistently keeping in sync with the music. Challenge yourself to get better by increasing the length of time during which you turn the volume off. The same concept can be applied when you're just walking around with your iPod.

5. Work Out And Practice At The Same Time

Since I'm a runner, another method I've tried is running in time with the music I'm listening to when I run. For example, your feet could strike the ground on every quarter note. You can use any subdivision that's appropriate in order to coordinate your feet with any tempo or groove. If the song is a slow 6/8 beat, you could run to every 8th-note subdivision. The slower the tempo, the smaller the subdivision you'll need in order to maintain a decent pace during your run.

Give these suggestions a try. With some dedication, you'll soon become "one with the click." Developing a sense of confidence in your internal clock and your ability to play with click tracks will help your drumming in many ways—not the least of which is, you'll get more gigs. In the meantime, have fun!

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Butch Walker

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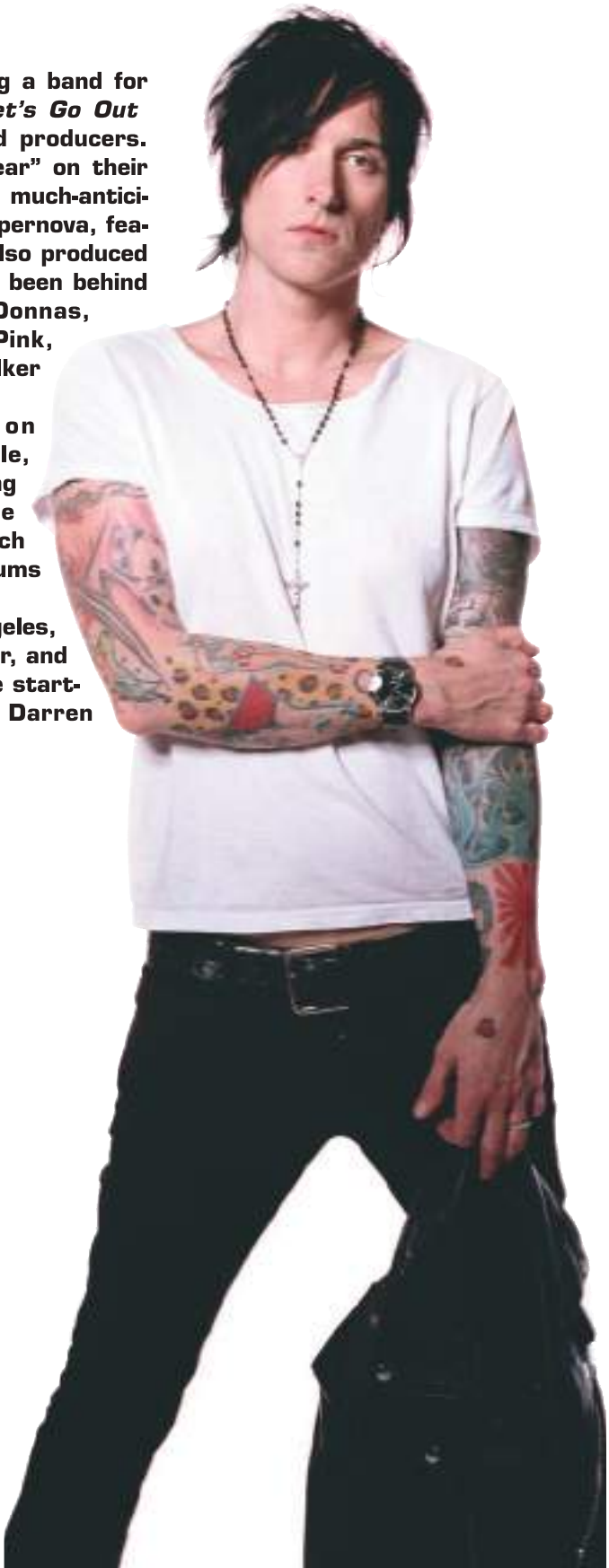
by Billy Amendola



Butch Walker is one busy dude. Besides fronting a band for his third solo CD, *Butch Walker And The Let's Go Out Tonite*, he's one of the industry's most in-demand producers. (*Rolling Stone* tagged him as "Producer Of The Year" on their 2005 Hot List.) Walker is currently producing the much-anticipated CD for TV's *RockStar* show with the band Supernova, featuring Mötley Crüe drummer Tommy Lee. Walker also produced Lee's last solo CD, *Tommyland*, *The Ride*. He's also been behind the board for such artists as Sevendust, The Donnas, American Hi-Fi, Lindsay Lohan, Hot Hot Heat, Pink, Bowling For Soup, SR-71, and Avril Lavigne. (Walker also wrote Lavigne's number-1 hit "Happy Ending.")

Butch was born Bradley Glenn Walker III on November 14, 1969, and grew up in Cartersville, Georgia. He gained recognition in the 1990s fronting the power/pop–rock band Marvelous 3, who made two records before disbanding. From there, Butch headed off to a successful solo career with his albums *Left Of Center* (2002) and *Letters* (2004).

***MD* caught up with Butch at his home in Los Angeles, to talk about his work as a producer and songwriter, and about some of the drummers he's worked with. We started by asking Butch about his current drummer, Darren Dodd.**

Butch: Darren is one of the best rock drummers in Atlanta. He made a mark playing on a lot of records and in a whole slew of indie-rock bands, like Ultra Baby Fat and Billionaire.

MD: What is it you like about his drumming?

Butch: Darren's very musical. He can sing, write music, and play guitar and piano. He's kind of like my Nigel Olsson [of Elton John fame]. I always say you can judge a drummer's personality by how many splash cymbals he has. [laughs] For me, it's no splashes, and *no* Chinas…three cymbals will do. And I don't need fifteen toms while I'm playing my song. So it's nice to have somebody like Darren who totally respects the song. Most drummers in rock bands—especially when they're young—are way too over-ambitious, and they don't care about anything in the song except *their* parts. I was guilty of that myself as a guitar player growing up. All I wanted to do was play sixteen-bar guitar solos—until I realized that they made the girls go to sleep. As a matter of fact, I have to coax parts out of Darren every once in a while because he's such a calm, cool, collected drummer. I haven't played with anyone with a better sense of rhythm and pocket.

MD: Did he play on the Lindsay Lohan record you produced?

Butch: Yes, and that stuff is, obviously, not a severe challenge. So you've got to have somebody who's very confident with

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"I always say you can judge a drummer's personality by how many splash cymbals he has."

themselves. I feel that way about Josh Freese also. He's a complete badass, and he gets to completely go off in A Perfect Circle. But when he plays on pop records, he just lays it down and doesn't get in the way. And he does it quickly too. There's nothing worse than spending two days trying to get a drum track out of a guy, when I can get a whole album's worth in one day from someone else and get on a creative roll. Still, I'm all for giving somebody a shot, and I rarely come in and go, "Alright, you can't play on this record."

When I did a record with The Donnas, Torry [Castellano] had just had tendon surgery. Her wrist was completely incapacitated, and she could barely hit a drum. But the record label was beating them up for the product. Torry was by no means ready to go in, but she played the parts the best she could, and we made it work. It was better for everyone's morale, and sometimes that's more important. When you're dealing with a band that's been together for eleven years, you don't want to break their spirit, you know?

MD: You've produced Sevendust. What was working with Morgan Rose like?

Butch: Morgan is a machine. We got probably the quickest drum tracks *ever* on a record. This is a guy who can play for the song and get it in one take—with pocket, feel, and groove. I've never seen somebody as good as him with meter and timing. He's very precise, but with feel. He's a songwriter as well, so he also knows when not to get in the way of the song. That's especially rare for a complex metal drummer, and he's definitely one of the best at that.

MD: How's working with Tommy Lee?

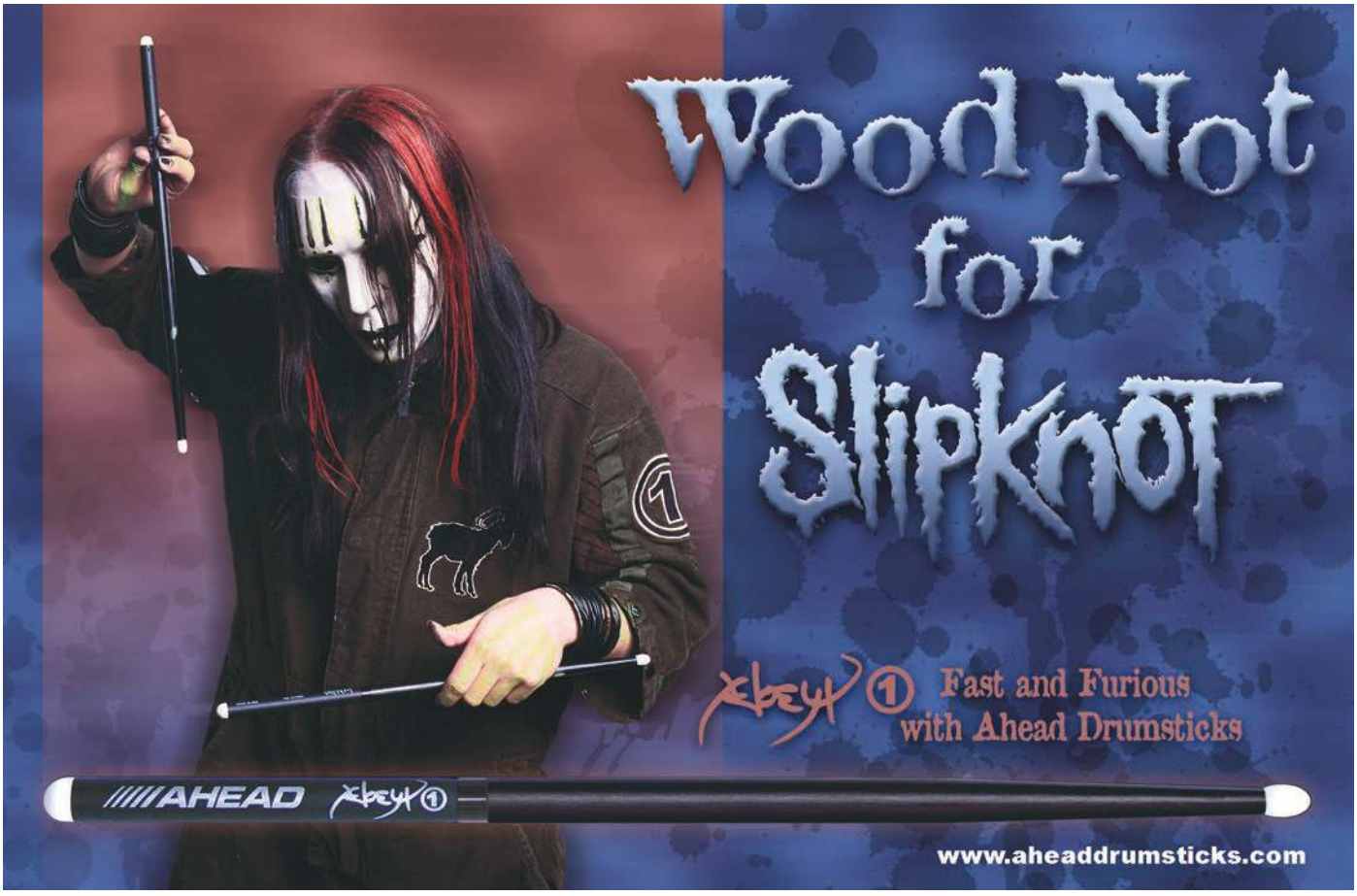
Butch: Tommy is probably the most spirited guy I've ever met in my life. He makes making records fun. I've never seen anyone take it more seriously while seeming like they don't, which is great. Not to mention, I grew up watching him and thinking he was one of the best metal drummers on the planet. So getting to go into the studio with him is kind of surreal. It feels like I'm his younger brother or something, so it's kind of weird going, "Alright Tommy, do that.... Do this over...." It's almost like, when the tape stops rolling, I want to go, "Dude...it's *Tommy Lee*."

MD: That's an important point about making a record. The overall vibe is one of the ingredients that go to tape.

Butch: Absolutely. If you work with people who are all about capturing that vibe, then you can't lose.

MD: That reminds me of Kenny Aronoff. You worked with him on Avril Lavigne's CD.

Butch: Kenny's one of my favorite drummers, as well as one of my favorite people. He comes in the studio swinging with 50,000 drums, a smile on his face, and stories to tell. I grew up a huge John Cougar Mellencamp fan. The best story Kenny tells is that in order to become one of the best and most in-demand studio drummers in the world, which he is, he first had to go through being replaced on his early records. He learned from that, and it's what made him such a badass. Talk about not



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MD: I think he created a big part of Mellencamp's sound.

Butch: A *huge* part of it. The solid, almost loop-based drum parts with overdubbed tom fills…that stuff is genius.

MD: Who was the drummer in Marvelous 3?

Butch: We called him Slug. I was fifteen years old when we started, and we played together until I was thirty. I didn't even know what it was like to play with another drummer. I kind of got spoiled because he's so solid. I haven't used him in the studio because he's been busy making music with other people in Atlanta. But we're still the best of friends.

MD: Did he play on the single "Freak Of The Week"?

Butch: Oh yeah! Slug played on all the Marvelous 3 records.

MD: If you were auditioning drummers, what would be your requirements?

Butch: Well, I'm a pretty whimsical guy, so I don't get too detailed. I have to like your vibe and attitude, and the way I'm going to connect with you in the studio, which has mostly to do with people skills. I'm going to ask what kind of drums you play and how you tune them, and how many drums you have in your setup. I'm going to say, "No splash cymbals, and no high piccolo snares." [laughs]

MD: What type of drum sound do you look for?

Butch: I like vintage, old-school, very tuned-down, fat, thuddy drum sounds. One of my favorites is a chrome-over-brass snare, with a Black Dot head tuned down low, and a wallet on top. For this new record, Darren put towels over all the heads on the drums, and he taped a wallet to the snare. We recorded in a very dry room, and I used a Space Echo on the drums and put tape slap on them. That kind of stuff sounds cool to me.

I appreciate the big modern rock drum sound too. I can get that all day long, and I do on certain records. But not on mine.

MD: What mistakes do you see drummers making in the studio?

Butch: Mostly, they play their ass off in rehearsal, but when the recording light comes on and the click is running, they choke. All of a sudden they're thinking too much about it, and that kills a record dead.

MD: Let's talk a bit about how you record the drums. Do you prefer them close-miked, or more ambient?

Butch: It depends. On my latest record, I used four or five mics on the drums, and they were all very close. I've also done the whole thirteen-mic thing on drums, like when I recorded Kenny for Avril. I'll do it different ways just to have options.

MD: When you mix the drums, do you prefer them panned from the audience's perspective or from the drummer's perspective?

Butch: I've always thought that was like a West Coast versus East Coast thing. I notice most West Coast engineers put the rack tom and the hi-hat on the right speaker and the floor tom on the left, which would be the audience's perspective. I've always done it from the drummer's perspective, but at the end of the day I don't think it matters that much. Most of the drums on my new record are mono, so it doesn't even matter. With the roomy stuff I did, it's just a few U87 mics: one off to the side, one above the snare over the head of the drummer, and one out front of the kick. And there's your drum sound right there.

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MD: The "Sweetest Little Song," on your latest CD, has a John Lennon vibe.

Butch: Yeah, it's the Plastic Ono Band sound. That's basically just the drums in a small room with a towel over the toms, the front head off the kick drum, and the snare tuned down with a wallet on it. It's a cool sound.

MD: Do you play drums at all?

Butch: I'm probably the world's worst drummer, but I'm the best drum-part writer. [laughs] I'm able to translate what I need. I can show parts to the drummer the way I want them to be done—but usually not without a laugh from everybody. I get the point across, and I've got mad skills with my beat box. There are a couple of albums on which I've played one or two songs on drums—just real simple stuff.

MD: When you're composing, do you start with a drum machine and guitar or piano?

Butch: I'll often lay down an acoustic guitar to a click. We'll come back and play to that, just to get a vibe. Then we'll get rid of the click and the acoustic altogether, and build from there. On the latest record, I had everybody in the room set up live, and we did it Motown style. We worked the song up from scratch, with the band all contributing their parts and arrangement ideas. Then we started recording it until it sounded right.

Sometimes it's a great thing to make a record that's *not* a big production and doesn't have tons of layers and a mechanical sort of feel. But there's something to be said for that big sound, also. Radio is definitely weaned on that sound, and it's kind of frustrating, because that's what they expect to hear for Top-40 radio. If you don't give the programmers that sound, they don't understand. And that's fine too. You just need to know what you're getting yourself into and what *you* want. I like doing both kinds of recordings, because both are challenges. It's a challenge to make the perfectly crafted, overproduced pop song, and then to make something sparse and beautiful and non-commercial.

MD: When you're producing a new artist, do you go for a sound, or is it specifically the song?

Butch: The song always wins. The best snare and kick drum sounds in the world are not going to change people's lives like a song will, or a beat will, or a lyric will. Sure, the drumming on some of our favorite records—like The Who's "Baba O'Reilly"—sounds amazing. But it's the feel and the part that made it what it is.

MD: When you're producing a band and the drummer isn't cutting it, how do you deal with it?

Butch: Over the years I've tried to be as diplomatic as possible. Sometimes that's hard to do if you're on a time crunch and people are expecting you to get the record done right now. I try to use my best judgment, but it's not an easy call. You don't want to be *that* guy.

Sometimes the band itself will vote a drummer out. That's harsh, but it happens, because a lot of these bands know what they want. On the other hand, sometimes when that has happened, it made the drummer practice harder and ultimately become a badass. There's nothing like telling someone that their job may be taken away from them to motivate them to improve.

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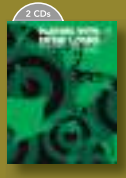

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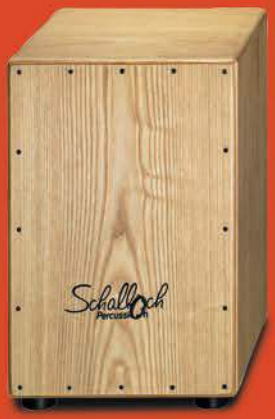

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Professor Funk

Jim Payn

Holds Court On The Art

e Of Groove

Story by Bill Milkowski
Photos by Paul La Raia

As author of the acclaimed book *Give The Drummer Some* (Manhattan Music/ Warner Bros. Publications)—the definitive work on the history of funk drumming—Jim Payne is widely regarded as something of a scholar on the subject of throwing down. An accomplished drummer and composer, he has earned a reputation over the past thirty-plus years as a first-class player, producer, clinician, and educator.

As the leader of his own hard-hitting funk-jazz organ trio, House Of Payne, featuring Adam Klipple on B-3 and Al Street on guitar, Payne is currently enjoying a kind of funk renaissance on the jam-band circuit. His most recent recordings (2003's *Sensei*, 2005's *Energie*, and a new disc, *Yes!*, due out shortly) showcase the trio's intricate interplay, quirky lines, slick syncopation, hip time displacement, and fat grooves. As Michael Lydon put it in the liner notes to *Energie*: "Think Thelonious Monk meets Booker T." (Appropriately, Payne pays tribute to two heroes on that CD with the tracks "Jabo" and "Clyde," for former James Brown drummers John "Jabo" Starks and Clyde Stubblefield.)

Payne has had a hand in the burgeoning jam-band scene from its inception, as producer of two early CDs by jam pioneers Medeski, Martin & Wood: 1993's *It's A Jungle In Here* and 1994's *Friday Afternoon In The Universe* (both on Gramavision). He's also produced and performed on recordings by former James Brown sidemen Maceo Parker, Fred Wesley, and Pee Wee Ellis.

Other notable Payne productions include 1992's *The Funk Stops Here* (Enja/Tiptoe), featuring Herbie Hancock's telepathic Headhunters rhythm tandem of bassist Paul Jackson and drummer Mike Clark, and 1993's *New York Funk* (Gramavision). The latter is a slamming compilation featuring tracks by The Mike Clark Group, The Fred Wesley Group, House Of Payne, and The Pee Wee Ellis Group, with a killer rhythm section of Stubblefield and bassist Anthony Jackson. Meanwhile, *Give The Drummer Some* is being reissued this year, retitled *The Great Drummers of R&B, Funk & Soul*.

Modern Drummer caught up with Payne at his cozy downtown New York residence, just a short walk away from Ground Zero at the southern tip of Manhattan. There he held court on the art of groove playing, pointing out some funky milestones along the way.

MD: You've made a lifetime study of funk playing and groove drummers of all different types. What's the essence of funky drumming?

Jim: When I was teaching at Drummers Collective in New York, I used to have people from other countries come up to me and ask, "What is funk?" And I'd realize that they were coming at it from a very different point of view. The music of some cultures is very prescribed and comes out of a distinct school of rhythm where there's only one way to play it. Well, you can't say that for funk, because it really is a *style* of music rather than a specific beat. So while you can say, "This is the bossa nova beat," for instance, you can't necessarily say, "This is the funk beat." Funk doesn't work that way because it's a creative idiom and there's a lot of different elements going into it. And drummers have come along and done different things with it over time, so it's always expanding.

In general, funk tends to go in the cracks of straight-8th rock rhythm, and that creates a whole different level of stuff going on. You've got 8th notes happening and you've also got 16th notes. That's really the key to it. The specific difference between rock and funk is that creative 16th-note patterns can be played on the bass drum, the snare, or the hi-hat—however you want to do it. So instead of "1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &," you've suddenly got "1e&a 2e&a 3e&a 4e&a." Or you can think of it as a double time being within the regular time. That went through all the James Brown and Sly Stone stuff and everything up to today.

Funk is a different way of feeling the rhythm, where normal patterns like backbeats can be thrown out the window. When Clyde Stubblefield did "Cold Sweat," he didn't really play backbeats. He played *some* backbeats, but he put other accents on the & of 4 instead of right on 4. That sort of jarred everybody at first, but then it started another level of groove happening. So in a nutshell, funk is about changing the normal pattern of 8th notes. You add something to it that gives you a different flow.

MD: What are some landmark moments in funk drumming?

Jim: Way back in 1959, Earl Palmer introduced the concept of playing 16th notes on the bass drum on the intro to Fats Domino's hit "I'm Walkin'." You can also hear it on James Brown's "I Got Money," with Clayton Fillyau on drums, who played with James through his early period, including the *Live At The Apollo* album. That was totally new ground. It was the birth of what they call the James Brown beat.

To me, that was definitely a monumental breakthrough. When I heard that I realized there was a whole new world of rhythm out there that you could mess with. James Brown's "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" was a funk landmark. Melvin Parker, who is Maceo's brother, played the ride cymbals and a very simple rimclick on the snare drum. But the bass drum was kicking it. All those bass drum notes on the &s were like…wow! And he's very clean in his technique. The drums on that song kicked everybody out of their seats. Melvin was an innovator, definitely, in that respect.

And then, of course, Clyde Stubblefield with "Cold Sweat," when he displaced the backbeat, was another landmark. That was a very important milestone in funk drumming. In terms of other monumental changes, of course, the ghost note that came in with the James Brown thing was an important step in the evolution of funk drumming. By utilizing those very soft notes in between the accents, the drumming had this undercurrent bubbling along with the whole thing. Jabo Starks was definitely into it. Clayton Fillyau played ghost notes all over *Live At The Apollo*. He credits a New Orleans drummer named Charles "Hungry" Williams as the guy who started it. Earl Palmer says he thought Hungry Williams was the guy who originated that beat, although other people thought it was Smokey Johnson who came up with it. But whoever it was, that beat definitely came out of New Orleans and it was perfected by James Brown's drummers, beginning with Clayton Fillyau.

Clyde Stubblefield's innovations were to play quarter notes on the hi-hat over the top, like on "Mother Popcorn." And then again, once that song came out, you had to go back to the woodshed to learn the coordination to be able to get that beat. Back in 1966, Joe Tex had this song "Papa Was Too." Clive Williams played drums for him at the time, and he introduced some new kind of 16th-note patterns on the bass drum. And there's a great drummer named Rodney Brown who played with Dyke & The Blazers during the mid-'60s who was

"I'm coming out of that whole bag of being able to have it groove but also have it be interesting along the way."

also a proponent of that beat.

And then, by the late '60s / early '70s, came Tower Of Power. You've got to say that Tower's drummer, David Garibaldi, was a *tremendous* innovator. When I heard "Soul Vaccination" in 1975 at a party in San Francisco, it floored me. I just kept going back to the record player and playing that song over and over because I couldn't believe it.

MD: What was Garibaldi bringing to the legacy of funk drumming?

Jim: I think he was coming out of the James Brown bag, but greatly expanding that vocabulary in a very logical way. He decided to not only break up the snare drum and play 16th notes on the bass drum, but he also broke up the right hand pattern on the hi-hat and incorporated some Latin influences.

Garibaldi had this pattern called the King Kong beat, which is an 8th, two 16ths, a 16th-note rest, two 16ths, and a 16th-note rest. And he would use that or things like that on the hi-hat and then incorporate another level. So at that point funk drummers had a broken-up hi-hat pattern, snare drum parts that could go anywhere, and bass drum parts that could do whatever you wanted.

MD: So this level of independence was developing a whole new tributary off of that funk mainstream, which continued with Mike Clark and on to players like Dave Weckl and Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez.

Jim: Right. And back in the late '60s and early '70s, you would never imagine that somebody could actually *do* the kinds of things that are being played today. But, of course, the human psyche is a funny thing. As soon as you say something is impossible, somebody somewhere is going to find a way to do it. And Garibaldi was able to do that very complicated stuff—different hi-hat, snare, and bass drum patterns—that people considered impossible back then. And not only that, he had accents and unaccented notes going along with it.

Garibaldi had two types of notes on the hi-hat and the snare drum. For the snare, he had ghost notes and accents, on the hi-hat he had accents and regular notes. And putting an accent on a right hand pattern on a hi-hat, again, takes it to another level. And then underneath that you've got a varying snare drum pattern. Just amazing! He must've practiced for hours to figure out his stuff. And I've worked on transcribing what Garibaldi has played. I can play the stuff, but I don't sound like him!

You learn a lot by copying the people you respect. But can you play something that a guy has originated himself and sound like them? Not with the masters, including Garibaldi. Go back and listen to *Back To Oakland* [1972] and the *Tower Of Power*

Five Greasy Pieces

Jim Payne's Tips On Playing Funky

1 The bass drum is key. Practice 16th-note doubles (two 16ths in a row) in all possible combinations and placements within the measure. This will take time—like reading a book. You can't do it all in one day. Do ten to fifteen minutes each day, slowly—quarter note = mm 50.

2 Work on snare drum ghost notes. Make them as soft as possible, then mix them with accents or rimshots.

3 Work towards getting away from strict backbeats on 2 and 4. Although this is not a requirement of funk, try putting the backbeats somewhere else and keeping the feel.

4 Transcribe the rhythms of your favorite funk drummers.

5 Playing too loud is a no-no if you want to be funky. Looseness, grease, and finesse get lost at high volume. The ghost notes get lost, and you just can't make it feel comfortable. Make the accents and rimshots speak out, but don't let the overall volume get too loud. That's how the masters—Clyde Stubblefield, David Garibaldi, Jabo Starks, Mike Clark, and Idris Muhammad—do it.

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Slickaphonics	Check Your Head At The Door
Slickaphonics	Slickaphonics Live
Ace Moreland	Sizzlin' Hot
Lucky Peterson	Lucky Strikes!
Yvonne Jackson	I'm Trouble
The J.B. Horns	Pee Wee, Fred And Maceo
The J.B. Horns	Funky Good Time/Live In Tokyo
Jim Payne	New York Funk
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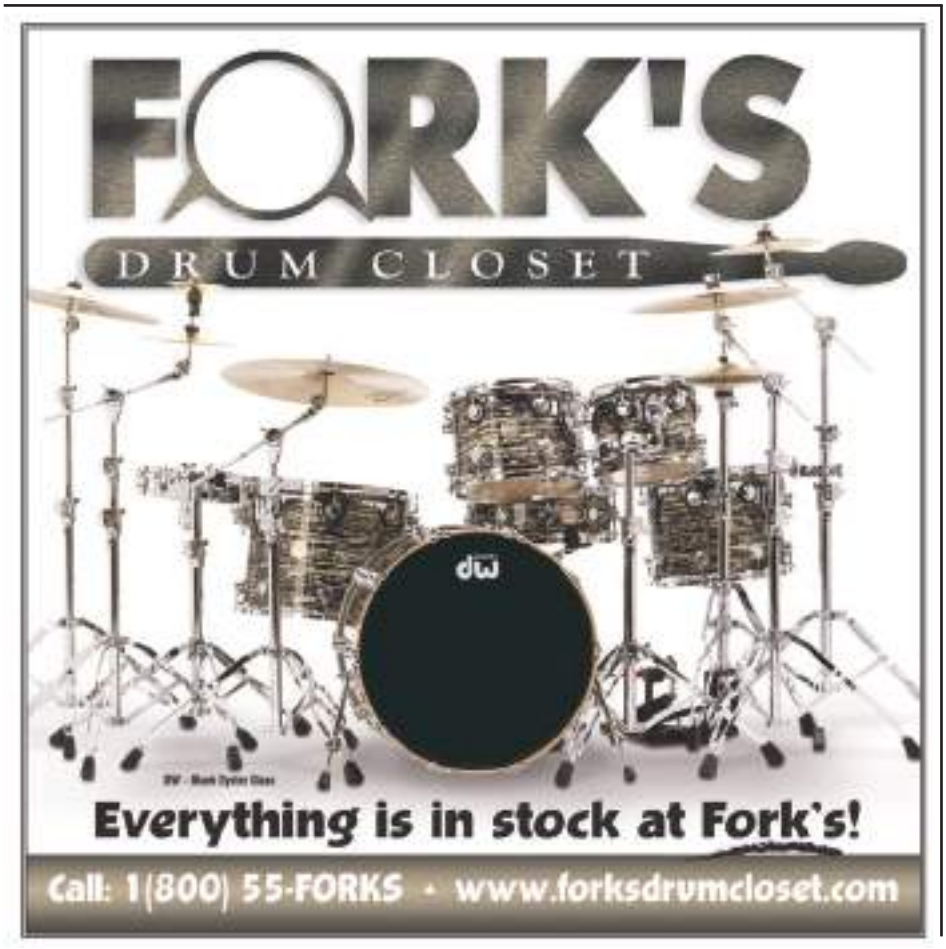
Jim Payne	Yes!



album [1973]. Or check out Tower Of Power live today. Garibaldi is back in the band playing with bassist Rocco Prestia. It's definitely an education to see Garibaldi and Rocco, the same rhythm section that played on all those hits from more than thirty years ago, out hitting it again today.

MD: What about Mike Clark's innovations with Herbie Hancock's Headhunters?

Jim: I think Mike was coming from a different place. He, of course, lived in Oakland, which was a hotbed of funk in the late '60s and early '70s. Sly Stone was there, as was Tower Of Power. I moved out there at the time just because of that whole scene. I lived there for three years to try and pick up on it. But Mike was really coming out of jazz and funk at the same time. His eyes will bug out when he listens to Clyde Stubblefield just the same way when he listens to Tony Williams. His idea was, "Let's try to combine this stuff."

In funk, the creation is in the beat or the groove that's going to happen. For a lot of those tunes that James Brown had hits with, whatever beat Clyde came up with became, in essence, the song. Mike Clark's thing was entirely different. He decided, "I'm going to improvise as I go along." But you've got to be careful because if you do that, the groove is going to go out the window unless you have a bass player that will work with you, as Mike had with Paul Jackson. So they were able to kind of trade places, so to speak, while keeping the funk flowing and steady.

Jackson was and is a tremendous bass player. He was able to play lines and have some spot in the line that would be the same every time. So he'd improvise around these lynchpin beats that you know are going to come around, and that locked it together. That gives the drummer freedom to do his thing, to use the beat but kind of get freer. Bootsy Collins did that with Jabo in James Brown's band on tunes like "Sex Machine," where he bounced around with 16th notes like crazy while the drummer laid down backbeats and also dialogued with what Bootsy was doing.

MD: That concept of Mike and Paul shifting roles back and forth sounds almost like a funk version of the relationship that Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian had as a rhythm section in The Bill Evans Trio, which was highly interactive kind of jazz counterpoint.

Jim: That's it. And that's the kind of thing I'm into now—implying the beat and play-

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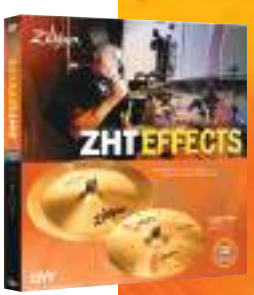

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Riley Breckenridge - Thrice

ing around with it. I don't care if you play, don't play, or if you leave the stage altogether, the time is still going to happen. So I can sit on top of the groove and beat it out to everybody, or I can do what Elvin Jones did, where he just let it go and then kind of hit it from behind a little bit here and there. He knew what was going on and he felt the pulse, but he didn't state it all the time, which is what Mike Clark does and hopefully what I'm doing too. I'm coming out of that whole bag of being able to have it groove but also have it be interesting along the way.

MD: What about the incredible push-and-pull hookup between Zigaboo Modeliste and George Porter of The Meters?

Jim: Zig was an amazing innovator on the drumset. I saw The Meters at the Apollo way back when "Cissy Strut" was a big hit for them. And I was amazed because when they played that tune in concert, Zig was playing it two hands on the hi-hat. Every once in a while he'd take his left hand and hit the hi-hat and then he'd take his right hand and hit the hi-hat, which was totally unconventional. When you hear the song, you think he's just hitting the hi-hat with his right hand. But playing it with two hands affected the feel. Zig really incorporated the second-line feel, where you have a bass drummer, a separate snare drummer, and a cymbal player too. And he was trying to put all of that together, and he had the coordination to do it.

Zig was looser than a lot of the funk drummers in that respect, depending on what period of The Meters you're talking about. I prefer the earlier period. During that time, drummers didn't have to play too loud. Most of the early James Brown stuff, from the beginning until about the '80s, the guys didn't play loud at all, and that allowed them to play with more finesse and a better feel, and they seemed to get out a lot more ideas that way. The same was true of Zigaboo. On those early Meters recordings he's not really whacking the hell out of the drums, so he was able to get a lot of nice little ghost notes happening. It's a very creative style of funk drumming.

It's too bad that a lot of drummers from that era weren't able to sustain those original grooves. What happened to Zig was what happened to a lot of guys, including some of the drummers with James Brown. When they got into bigger venues, they started playing louder. And then when disco came in, which involved a real pounding action, some of those guys thought, "Well, I gotta play like that now." And they ended up playing louder. But by doing that you end up losing the potential to do all that finesse underneath. So it kind of squelched the development of funk drumming, at least for a while.

MD: What about Bernard Purdie's contribution to funk?

Jim: He's one of the true masters. All you have to do is pick up a copy of Aretha Franklin's "Rock Steady" and listen to it to understand that. I listened a lot to the Aretha album *Live At The Fillmore West,* and pretty much everything Purdie did. I met him years after he had done the Aretha stuff, when he became a drumming icon. He called himself "The Hit Maker" at the time. He had this little sign that he would take around with him to sessions—Bernard Purdie, The Hit Maker—and he'd put it right there by his drums. He is, of course, a great self-promoter, but he would always back it up.

Purdie played on *so* many hits, and he always played great. At the time I studied with him, he had this studio at 1840 Broadway, which used to be the old

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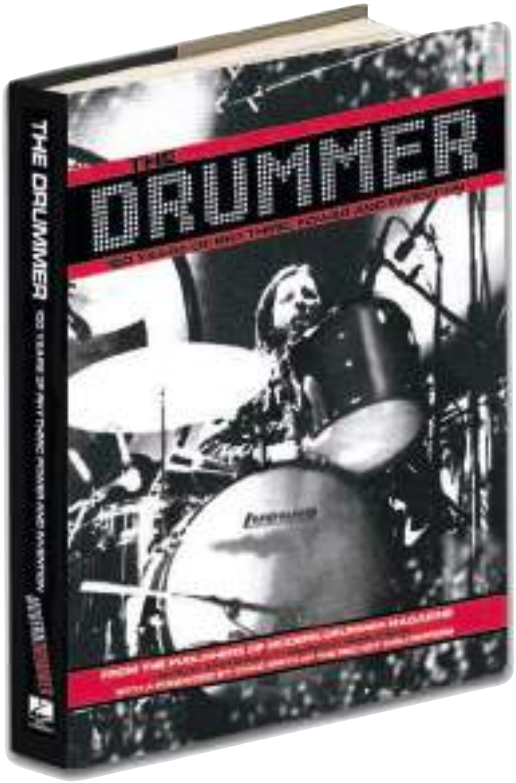

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Atlantic Studios. He had two floors. There was a recording studio on one floor and three practice studios above that, which is where he taught drums. He was very busy at that time, dealing with sessions and talking business on the phone all the time.

The best part about studying with Purdie was that he would take me along to his sessions after lessons. He'd do a B.B. King session, a Pepsi commercial, or an Ashford & Simpson session, and I'd tag along with him and sit behind him in the drum booth on the floor, just observing what he was doing. I learned a lot from Purdie at those sessions—about drumming and extra-musical things.

I learned that the drummer has to be a very strong, confident person to lead the thing. You have to convince everybody that *this* is the time and you guys sit on top of it. And then dealing with the producers and the artists is an art in itself. I remember one session Purdie did where he had some cross-sticking thing that he was doing, but the producer kept going, "No, man, that's not it. It's not working." And Purdie said, "Okay. I think I've got something that'll make it work. Let's try this." So they'd do it again and I swear Purdie would play the exact same thing, but because he had hyped it up, the producer said, "Yeah, man! That's it!" And he'd say, "I told you you'd like that one." So there's a certain amount of psychology and mind games going on behind the scenes. And that taught me that your instrument is one thing, but you've also got to develop chops for dealing with people.

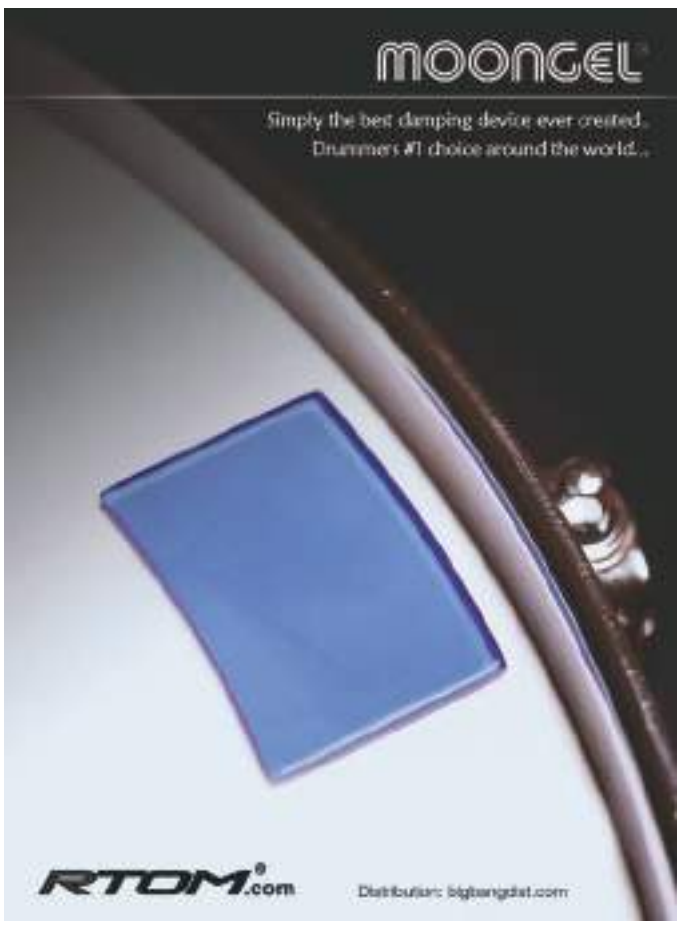
MD: Is there an investigation of funk happening now with a new generation of drummers?

Jim: Absolutely. It's happening in the jam-band and hip-hop scene. Both worlds have basically given a whole new life to vintage funk grooves. And the interesting thing for me now is the jam-banders. They're what inspired me to put my band together. They want to hear real music and see people up there playing it. They don't want a sanitized show of some kind. They want to see real people sweating it out on stage. And they love the whole funk thing of breaking up the beat in creative ways.

Look at MMW's Billy Martin. He's a master of that, like a laid-back Clyde with more improvisation going on. I have students coming to me all the time saying, "How do I play like Billy Martin?" He definitely has a fresh take on it, and he's inspired a lot of players.

And while jam-band drummers are incorporating those James Brown beats in their music, hip-hop producers are busy sampling "Funky Drummer" and all those grooves from the '60s and '70s and making hit records out of them. The hip-hoppers used to make up beats on the drum machine and then at some point they decided, "Well, it sounds better if Bernard Purdie played it." So they take two bars of Purdie, sample and loop it, and that's their whole drum track. That's a testimony to the viability of those original grooves. Those vintage beats are still the essence of popular records today.

For more on Jim Payne, check out his Web site: www.funkydrummer.com.



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Chick Webb

The Little Big Band Giant

by Burt Korall

Chick Webb was *the* drummer in the 1930s. Everyone wanted to hear and watch him, hoping to be enriched by the experience. Webb made the seemingly impossible possible. When he was at the drums, the instrument took on expressive possibilities it never had before.

"All of us in that 'learning groove' during the Depression years were enlightened by Chick," Gene Krupa once told me. "He redefined the drummer's job, particularly in the big band. Chick changed my direction entirely. When I came to New York from Chicago and was exposed to him, my playing almost instantly became more relevant, more modern. He showed me what to do, and how to do it. But make no mistake—his manner of playing could be elusive, even to technically gifted drummers."

"Chick was a powerhouse, an elemental force," virtuoso clarinetist, bandleader, and swing icon Artie Shaw said. "The thing I remember about Chick was the sense of controlled abandon that permeated his playing."

The late Allen Paley, an excellent New York drummer and teacher, had vivid memories of Webb's performances at Harlem's Savoy Ballroom. "Chick's drumming had everything," Paley explained, "from relentless energy to surprising subtlety. He was completely untrained, couldn't read a thing. He just responded to music and learned by constantly playing, listening, and allowing his great talent to grow."

Overcoming Adversity

Chick suffered from tuberculosis of the spine, resulting in his being a hunchback. But his chronic illness didn't negatively affect his playing. He ignored the constant pain. He had strong wrists, huge hands, and long fingers. Only his torso was short and relatively underdeveloped.

Webb in action was unforgettable. He was so overloaded with talent, he sometimes played too much. His solos and supportive playing could be cluttered. He'd use his entire kit in his performances. He had a comparatively large console-type drumset that had been developed for him by the great drummer/inventor Billy Gladstone. It included a snare, a large bass drum, two tom-toms, specially mounted cymbals, a hi-hat, a custom-built bass drum pedal, temple blocks, and a cowbell, all of which Chick used a good deal in solos and supportive band playing.

What Webb suggested in his drumming was a modern, melodic style—the beginning of bebop. He didn't just put together a bunch of beats like other technically gifted drummers did. He made music, inventing new rhythmic ideas. He added to the general view of syncopation and the structure and feel of big band playing. He played like a machine gun: fast, clean, and often flawless. When the diminutive drummer wasn't performing, he was talking about music and suggesting how it could be improved. Music and drumming were his obsessions.

In The Beginning

Chick Webb's love affair with percussion began when he was about three years old. His family encouraged him to play, in the hope that it would enhance his strength and improve his poor health. As

a youngster, Chick sold papers on the streets of Baltimore—his home town—ultimately earning enough to buy a drumset. Like many youngsters who were fascinated with the instrument, Chick first learned how to structure drum solos. Then he moved on to playing and exchanging ideas with other young, ambitious instrumentalists.

Chick's first regular employment was with Baltimore's Jazzola Band on Chesapeake Bay excursion boats. As time passed, he met and befriended players who tested his capacities. These included guitarist John Trueheart, saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, pianist Don Kirkpatrick, trumpeter Bobby Stark, and—most notably—Duke Ellington, as well as players in Duke's orbit, like Johnny Hodges and Cootie Williams.

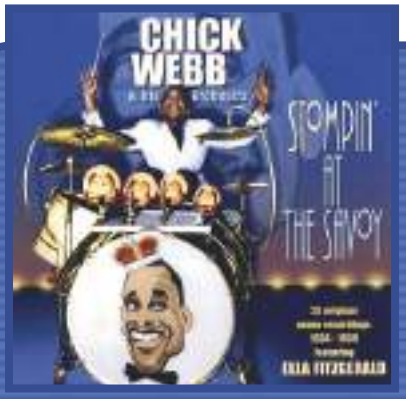
Word got around New York about Chick Webb, landing him a seat in Edgar Dowell's band. He also appeared with his own unit, The Harlem Stompers, and he toured with Louis Armstrong. Finally, in 1935, Webb got an extended booking with his big band at the Savoy Ballroom. It was at this venue that the drummer established himself as a jazz personality and dance band leader.

A perfectionist as leader and player, Webb encouraged frequent rehearsals. He concentrated on arrangements by such writers as Benny Carter, Don Redman, and Charlie Dixon, as well as Edgar Sampson—creator of such swinging originals as "Stompin' At The Savoy" and "Don't Be That Way."

"My band worked opposite Chick at the Savoy several times," bandleader Andy Kirk recalled. "I'd often stand out on the floor after my set and watch him. He'd get some wonderful things going with the dancers. He could translate into percussive terms what they were doing on the floor—tricks and all. It was like a show in itself. And he'd swing that band! The whole band was him, really."

Chick's big band was unquestionably his most effective vehicle. But studio recordings of the band tended to be disappointing. Webb had difficulty projecting all he had to offer within the studio environment. His sound, multiple abilities, and relationship with the band escaped the attention and full understanding of record engineers. Generally, live recorded performances of Webb and his band presented a much truer picture.

Webb arranger Van Alexander said, "The records keep Chick's enormous talent a secret. They only suggest what he could do.



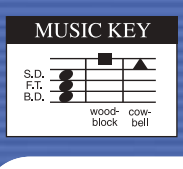
CHICK WEBB
"HARLEM CONGO"

TRANSCRIBED BY MICHAEL DAWSON

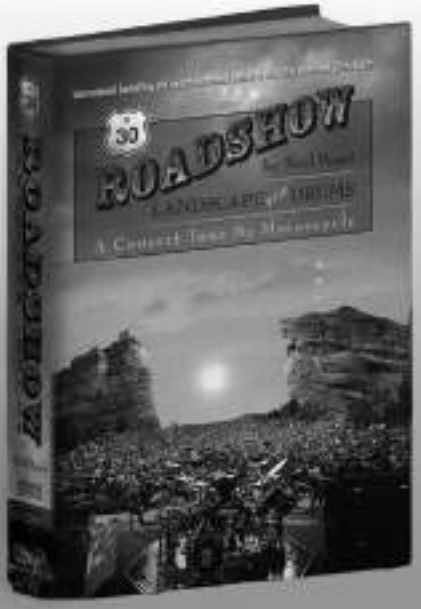
Chick Webb's amazing technique and dazzling showmanship made him the idol of many drumming greats, including Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Art Blakey, and Max Roach.

In "Harlem Congo" (recorded in 1937 and reissued on the CD *Stompin' At The Savoy*), Webb plays a short solo that remains technically and musically impressive after nearly seventy years. Roaring out of the gates, Webb opens with a flurry of syncopated accents that reoccur throughout the solo. Check out how he weaves similar accent figures into each four-measure phrase. Also, notice the three-note melodic motif that glides between the cowbell, woodblock, and tom-tom in measures 11–12.

In measures 7–8, 13–14, 17–18, and 21–22, Webb crosses the bar line with three-beat figures, foreshadowing the sophisticated phrasing of Art Blakey, Max Roach, and other bebop pioneers.



ROADSHOW
LANDSCAPE WITH DRUMS
A Concert Tour By Motorcycle by Neil Peart



Traveling by motorcycle, riding 21,000 miles of back roads and highways in North America and Europe — from Appalachian hamlets and Western deserts to Scottish castles and Alpine passes — critically-acclaimed author Neil Peart takes the reader on a journey in search of the perfect show, the perfect meal, the perfect road, and an elusive inner satisfaction that comes only with the recognition that the journey itself is the ultimate destination.

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Chick Webb

I heard him live, night after night, and he was never less than exhilarating. He felt such happiness when he played, and he transmitted that spark to the players."

When a gifted young singer named Ella Fitzgerald joined Webb in 1934, the band began to gain commercial success. Ella was the band's link to a larger audience, including entry into the white community at a time when segregation was more the rule than the exception.

The Great Battle Of The Bands

One of the key events in Chick Webb's professional life took place on May 11, 1937. This was a "band battle" at the Savoy between Chick's band and the enormously popular Benny Goodman band, which featured drum superstar Gene Krupa. It was one of the major jazz events of the 1930s, drawing a large crowd to the ballroom and surrounding area. When the playing was done, the battle was declared a victory for Chick and his ensemble. Gene Krupa openly acknowledged that Webb and company had outdone him and the Goodman band on that memorable evening.

The last few years of Webb's life were a mixture of tragedy and triumph. He proved what he could do, and he enjoyed increasing success. But, sadly, Chick's amazing talent could not defeat his chronic illness. Chick Webb died on June 16, 1939, at the age of thirty-two.

When I asked Buddy Rich about Webb, he said, "Chick represented true hipness. His playing was original...different...completely his own."

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★☆☆☆☆ Poor

CHICO HAMILTON
JUNIFLIP/BELIEVE/6TH AVENUE ROMP/HERITAGE

★★★★☆

Todd Boebel

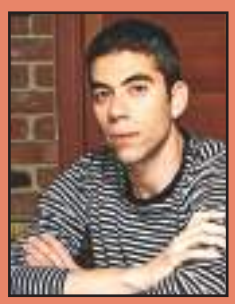
Great news for us kids. We're living in a time when several great jazz drummers are now in their eighties and still have plenty to teach. At eighty-five, Chico Hamilton has released *four* new CDs. All discs feature Chico's fine core band, while some titles also include guest stars such as vocalist **Fontella Bass** and trombonist **George Bohanon**. And collectors should note an appearance by recently departed psychedelic hero **Arthur Lee** (on *Juniflip). Believe* hits pay dirt most consistently and *Romp* favors R&B covers, but the discs are essentially interchangeable as multifaceted sets of Chico's bluesy swing and soul jazz. What is *not* interchangeable is the one and only Chico. Often noted as a conceptualist (with his "chamber" groups) and talent scout for future greats, Chico's true legacy is his drumming: a soulful sound radiating deep grit and indomitable personality. The sound of a leader. (Joyous Shout!) **Jeff Potter**

THURSDAY A CITY BY THE LIGHT DIVIDED

★★★★☆

We've heard Thursday drummer **TUCKER RULE** on his band's previous efforts, but it's never been quite like this. On their latest, *A City By The Light Divided*, Rule appears emancipated, carving his own niche amongst the heavily dynamic emo-core collection, and he does so with blade-sharp stickwork. There's the breathy calmness of Rule's tom rudiments in "Sugar In The Sacrament," which end up being a calculated front end for the ballistic, crash-cracking parts of "At This Velocity." Plus, fine details like the snug hi-hat patterns on "Telegraph Avenue Kiss," will make you want to set your iTunes to Repeat All, just to catch anything else you might've missed upon first listen. (Island) **Waleed Rashidi**

MY LATEST OBSESSION Drummers On Drummers



NEW FOUND GLORY'S **CYRUS BOLOOKI** ON **BAD RELIGION**'S THE PROCESS OF BELIEF

"As a drummer in a punk rock band, being at least familiar with Bad Religion is almost essential. I was absolutely floored when I heard the speed, accuracy, and creativeness of **Brooks Wackerman**'s drumming. I'm still trying to figure out many things about his playing on this CD. From the speedy drumming in "Supersonic" and "Can't Spot It" to the solid mid-tempo beats in "Sorrow" and "The Defense," Brooks brings it like no other, always finding ways to change up fills and transitions to keep listeners on their toes. I especially like how Brooks loves to "anchor" his single-stroke fills with the kick drum, providing quarter/8th-note kicks to keep the "beat" going. He loves to keep a steady single-stroke roll going, no matter what accents he hits or what drums he's using."

New Found Glory's latest album is *Coming Home*.

JONAH SMITH'S **MARKO DJORDJEVIC** ON **JOHN COLTRANE**'S INTERSTELLAR SPACE

"If there was ever a message sent from our Earth onward, omnidirectionally, to the farthest reaches of the universe, this album is it! Using a saxophone, drumset, some bells, and an occasional vocal exclamation to shape the most incredible sound I have ever heard, on this album John Coltrane and drummer **Rashied Ali** represent human expression in its purest form. Two people on a quest, sharing a vision, a longing to connect with the eternal, through the devoted practice of their art in place of a prayer. *Interstellar Space* was recorded almost forty years ago, yet sounds as fresh and modern as if it was done yesterday—timeless, meaningful art.

Jonah Smith's most recent album is titled, simply, *Jonah Smith*. For more on Marko Djordjevic, go to www.svetimarko.com or www.myspace.com/svetimarko.

GREG UPCHURCH OF 3 DOORS DOWN

What are you listening to now? I like Keane. It's interesting music to me. Their drummer, **Richard Hughes**, really plays what the song needs and nothing more. That's what's cool about it. It all fits together quite nicely.

So stuff doesn't have to be technical for you to dig it? The reason I've gotten this far is because I'm not a soloist or a show-off. If you're a drummer who wants to make it in the business, stop learning Neil Peart drum solos. Start learning to listen to the music. My job isn't to make me look good, but to make the *band* look good.

The latest album by 3 Doors Down is called *Seventeen Days*. (Interview by **Steven Douglas Losey**)

SKERIK'S SYNCOPATED TAINT SEPTET HUSKY

★★★½

Like a party for only the coolest cats, the sophomore release from Skerik's horn-based septet fuses funk, jazz, second-line, and hip-hop textures into a primo example of postmillennial groove. For an instrumental record populated by potent improvisers, the writing is unusually strong and makes *Husky* much more than an excuse to blow. **JOHN WICKS** supports the honking, whistling, soaring horn section with a light touch and a dry, thumping snare that's rich with low-end fatback. He has a nimble pocket feel, and he swings gently and gracefully. His crisp syncopation lends an unmistakable air of Fela Kuti–like Afrobeat to the swaggering "Go To Hell, Mr. Bush." (Hyena) **Michael Parillo**

STONE SOUR COME WHAT (EVER) MAY

★★★

Ex-Soulfly drummer **ROY MAYORGA** takes over Stone Sour's drum throne on *Come What (Ever) May*, the sophomore effort for the band whose members include Slipknot's singer **Corey Taylor** and guitarist **Jim Root**. When the music's Slipknot-ish, double bass and triplets fit the bill nicely. When it's nu-metal and alternative, Mayorga's sound is big with over-the-top drum production. A pleasant surprise is the disc's quieter moments and the slow-tempo songs like "Through Glass," where Mayorga embellishes the melody with monster fills on the chorus. (Roadrunner) **Steven Losey**

RANDY BRECKER WITH MICHAEL BRECKER SOME SKUNK FUNK

★★★★

A Brecker Bros. reunion of sorts, featuring classic Brecker tracks, recorded live in Leverkusen. **PETER ERSKINE** fans who have not heard him "tear it up" in a while are in for a treat. The veteran drummer reminds us what real fusion drumming is all about, as he takes command of these intricate instrumental arrangements with taste, dynamics, and musical creativity. This is the best live Brecker performance to come along in years—thanks, in no small part, to the masterful drumming of Erskine. (Telarc) **Mike Haid**

SICK OF IT ALL DEATH TO TYRANTS

★★★½

On their ninth album, *Death To Tyrants*, Sick Of It All drummer **ARMAND MAJIDI** sticks to what works well, turning his kit into a percussive battleground, waging musical war alongside an arsenal of distorted guitars. Songs like "Machete" lunge straight for the ears, as Majidi's patterns barrel forward with equal parts punch and poise. The thunderous tom phrases of "Always War" give way to Majidi revving up the pace, double time–style. But it's the classic feel of "Leader" that proves that for Sick Of It All, hardcore always wins. (Abacus) **Waleed Rashidi**

SIGNIFICANT REISSUES BY PETRA JONES

KEITH MOON TWO SIDES OF THE MOON

Coinciding with the sixtieth anniversary of **KEITH MOON**'s birth, Sanctuary Records has released an expanded version of the Who drummer's 1975 solo album. While some of Moon's passion, intensity, and sheer energy comes across on "The Kids Are Alright" and "Move Over Ms L," the rest of the album is less inspired. Neither **RINGO STARR**'s drumming contribution nor former Beatles roadie Mal Evans' mixes manage to revitalize the other lackluster tracks or bring out the drums in the mix. There are some interesting outtakes, including "Hot Rod Queen," marked by Moon's irrepressible sense of humor. Sadly, though, the extended album offers us little more of Keith's best moments than the original did. (Sanctuary)

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MUSE BLACK HOLES AND REVELATIONS

★★★★

Muse's *Black Holes And Revelations* is, in fact, a revelation. The English trio plays to packed arenas in Europe, but their name has always elicited a response akin to "Don't they kinda sound like Radiohead?" when dropped in the States. No more. *Black Holes…* is explosive, bordering on schizophrenic. That's not a bad thing when man (drummer **DOMINIC HOWARD**) and machine can meld for alt-disco pulses ("Map Of The Problematique," "Knights Of Cydonia") that are powerfully delivered and sonically flawless. Even when the intensity level drops, like in the delicate ballad "Soldier's Poem" (with solid, subtle brushwork from Howard), the originality doesn't suffer. (Warner Bros.) **Patrick Berkery**

TAKING THE REINS

STANTON MOORE III

New Orleans flame thrower Stanton Moore's third album is not an entirely successful outing, at times rehashing stock Big Easy ideas with little thought. But the supercharged moments overwhelm the lazy notes. "Big 'Uns Get The Ball Rolling" sounds like a warped version of John Scofield's band, with Moore smacking snare accents in a hyper second-line strut. "Chilcock" bubbles with stomping rhythms and a big-bellied, hi-hat smashing glee, "(Don't Be Coming With No) Weak Sauce" and "Dunkin' In The Deep" are pure Zigaboo Modeliste, and the prowling "When The Levee Breaks" reveals Moore's traditional snare drum mastery. (Telarc) **Ken Micallef**

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★★★★½

These innovative contemporary jazz icons celebrate twenty-five years of musical creation on this outstanding live CD/DVD collection featuring cream-of-the-crop Jackets compositions. Drummer **MARCUS BAYLOR** has settled nicely into his jacket, while the group collectively has evolved into one of the longest-running high-caliber quartets in the history of modern jazz. Baylor's drumming combines a comfortable balance between traditional and contemporary jazz techniques with fiery soloing concepts and impressive ambidextrous hand technique. The DVD features the current band in well-documented concert footage, as well as interviews and inspiring performances from former jackets drummers **WILL KENNEDY** and **PETER ERSKINE**. (Heads Up) **Mike Haid**

WORLD OF DRUMSET RUDIMENTS
BY ROMAN KOBIELA

BOOK LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED $25

★★★½

This seventy-eight-page book should have been titled "Universe" Of Drumset Rudiments, due to its unending variations of rudiment-based sticking patterns. Kobiela's goal was to revise and modernize the essential stickings of the standard 26 rudiments. There are five in-depth sections: snare drum rudiments, rudimental progressions, progressive grace notes rudiments, advanced linear phrasings, and odd meters. Each is jam-packed with demanding patterns that include hi-hat and bass drum ostinatos to challenge the already difficult sticking variations. Kobiela offers practice tips and various grooves that apply to each exercise. It's hard to imagine anyone actually completing this challenging book, but it would be well worth the effort for any drummer serious about improving his or her hands and four-way independence skills. (purchasing@steveweissmusic.com) **Mike Haid**

TIME AWARENESS FOR ALL MUSICIANS
BY PETER ERSKINE

BOOK/CD LEVEL: ALL $16.95

★★★★

Time. When all is said and done, it's what we drummers are supposed to keep, and an element of music that most musicians—including many drummers—take for granted. Drummer Peter Erskine's new book focuses on time, aiming to make musicians more aware of it to help them develop it. His opening CD example of an experienced student playing a simple melody alone, and then with a click superimposed over it, leaves no room for argument that what we play and what we *think* we play are two different things.

To address this, Erskine explores the inner clock, thinking in subdivisions, tempo, phrasing, and so forth. As the book progresses, barlines and time signatures become obliterated, leaving the musician with an improved sense of time. Be it jazz, rock, funk, classical, or any other genre, Erskine touches on the fundamental importance of time in conveying music effectively. Throughout the book are examples that any musician can use, illuminated by Erskine's commentary and judicious quotes from others.

How much time is invested in this book depends on the individual. But if approached honestly, it will doubtless get one thinking. Conversational in its approach, the topic is an important one that will benefit students and teachers alike. (Alfred) **Martin Patmos**

AND FURTHERMORE...

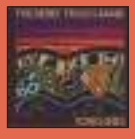
MATHIESON/LANDAU/LABORIEL/LABORIEL
ANOTHER NIGHT AT THE BAKED POTATO 2005

Comparing Mathieson's 2000 live release featuring Vinnie Colaiuta to this more recent two-CD set with **ABE LABORIEL JR.**, playing much of the same high-energy fusion material with the same band, makes for an interesting study in contrasting styles. Laboriel's warm sound personifies his physique: large and dominating. While his pop/rock–oriented style sounds more restrained than Colaiuta's adventurous polyrhythmic approach, overall, Abe Jr. delivers an impressive performance. (www.gregmathieson.com) **Mike Haid**

LES CLAYPOOL OF WHALES AND WOE

Primus bass player Les Claypool's latest disc is like a virulent virus. The clicking percussion samples (courtesy of **MIKE DILLON**) and backwards, bloated bass riffs of "Back Off Turkey," the interplay of vibraphone, hi-hat patterns, and sitar in "Filipino Ray," and the multi-weird "One Better" are as insidious as they are entertaining. If there's a Hieronymus Bosch award for musical oddness, *Whales* wins hands down. (Prawn Song) **Will Romano**

THE DEREK TRUCKS BAND SONGLINES (CD/DVD)



With each recording, Derek Trucks comes one step closer to becoming the guitar god of the new millennium. And drummer **YONRICO SCOTT** and percussionist **COUNT M'BUTU** are a seamless, organic rhythm section. Columbia has also released a well-produced DVD from the DTB's most recent tour that reveals the amazing telepathic musical communication within this talented unit. (Columbia) **Mike Haid**

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Stu Purpur

Reigniting Rock With Sittin' Idol

Thirty-two-year-old Stu Purpur has been playing drums for nineteen years. Earlier in his career, Stu played in several bands before rediscovering his love for hard rock with Calgary-based band Sittin' Idol. Commenting on his current gig, Stu explains, "I feel extremely fortunate to have found this band. Somehow I've ended up in a group with three other guys who are almost a decade younger than me, but who essentially grew up on the same music that I did. We draw our collective influences from Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, Metallica, Pantera, Tool, and Pink Floyd, among others."

Sittin' Idol has released two full-length albums. Their self-titled debut was named the number-two indie release of 2002 by *Brave Words And Bloody Knuckles* magazine. Their second release, *Gallery*, nabbed the fourth spot on the same chart for 2005. In 2004, Sittin' Idol toured the US with Damageplan and Drowning Pool. The band is currently writing their third album, which is scheduled for release in 2007.

Hometown: Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Tools: Pearl birch drums, Sabian and Zildjian cymbals, Tama Iron Cobra pedals, Ahead drumsticks
Influences: Vinnie Paul, Joey Jordison, Neil Peart, Danny Carey, Carter Beauford
More info: www.sittinidol.com

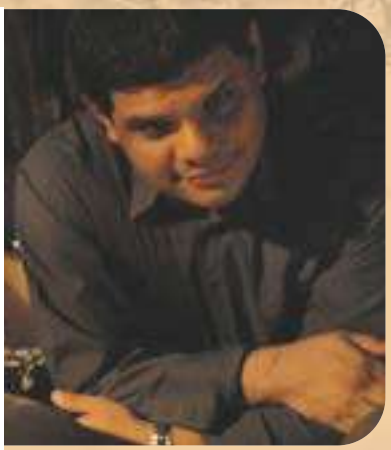
Jaime Aníbal De León

Panamanian Powerhouse

After studying at NYC's famed music school Drummers Collective, Panamanian drummer Jaime De León returned to his Central American home with a wealth of knowledge that he had absorbed from teachers Frank Katz, Zach Danziger, Bobby Sanabria, Mike Clark, Kim Plainfield, and Jojo Mayer. Reflecting on his stint in the Big Apple, De León states, "New York changed my life forever. It made me realize how much I had to practice in order to become a professional drummer." Back in Panama, Jaime applied his newfound skills to gigs with many notable Panamanian musicians like Dino Nugent, Victor Paz, Victor Boa, Hermanos Cruz, Carlos Cortés, and Rodrigo Denis.

In 2002 Jaime was hired by the great tenor sax player Carlos Garnett (Miles Davis, Art Blakey, Charles Mingus, Freddie Hubbard). With Garnett, Jaime appeared at the Panama Jazz Festival each year between 2003 and 2006, sharing the stage with world-renowned artists like Danilo Perez, Jack DeJohnette, Joe Lovano, Charlie Hunter, and Kurt Rosenwinkel.

De León also keeps busy with his jungle/hip-hop fusion band Los Intelectuales de la Música Chatarra, and he maintains an active schedule as a private instructor and clinician.



Hometown: Panama City, Panama
Tools: Tama drums and hardware, Yamaha and Slingerland snares, Bosphorus cymbals, Evans drumheads, Vic Firth and Zildjian sticks, Puresound snare wires
Influences: Frank Katz, Zach Danziger, Gary Novak, Paco Séry, Stewart Copeland, Jojo Mayer, Ahmir Thompson, Trilok Gurtu, Robby Ameen, Clarence Penn, Kim Thompson, Antonio Sanchez, Aphex Twin, Gene Lake, Joe Morello, Ringo Starr
More info: jadlsdrums@gmail.com

Mike Bruno

Bringing Funky Fusion To A Town Near You

After starting out as a classical violist, Mike Bruno switched to percussion in college and began touring with a variety of bands. Now the drummer's full-time gig is with the original funk-fusion outfit Spare Parts, who've spent the past few years traveling throughout the US. In that time, Mike and his bandmates have shared the stage with such notable artists as Stanton Moore, Butch Miles, Jazz Mandolin Project, Fareed Haque, Particle, and Liquid Soul. The group played over thirty cities in 2006, and continues to tour the club circuit around the country. They've also recently released their second studio album, *Brain Candy*, which includes the drummer's funky composition "Lake Shore Drive" and an odd-meter smorgasbord titled "11 + 12."

When discussing his goals, Mike explains, "My main objective is to keep furthering my abilities in playing and writing, and as a human. I also want Spare Parts to keep recording and touring with continued success. Eventually I would also like to bring my rotating cymbal invention to fruition."

When not on the road with his band, Mike freelances around Chicago and teaches privately.

Hometown: Chicago, Illinois
Education: Bachelors in music business from Southern Illinois University—Carbondale and a masters in jazz performance from De Paul University
Tools: Yamaha drums, Pearl and Bison snares, Zildjian cymbals and sticks, Evans heads, Tama Iron Cobra
pedals, Roland electronics, Humes & Berg cases
Influences: Lenny White, John Bonham, Steve Gadd, Billy Cobham, Billy Martin, Jeff Watts, Art Blakey, Jon Theodore, Elvin Jones, Dennis Chambers, ?uestlove, Willie Jones III
More info: www.sparepartsmusic.com

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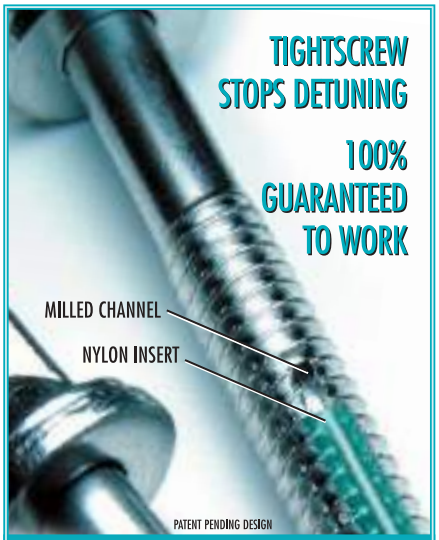

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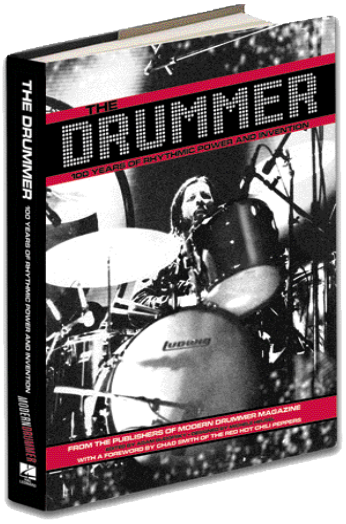

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Wanted

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1970s heads—Ludwig Striders, x-heavy, smooth, white or Ludwig red label, X.Hdb1400 smooth white, two each, 18 and 26 and one 15. Rusty Beck, 297 Bellaire Rd., Avon Lake, OH 44012.

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Miscellaneous

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Gretsch drums, **Paiste Formula 602**, traditional cymbals. Hal Howland, www.halhowland.com.

You need: **Drumfarm** vintage drum list. Bobby Chiasson's Jollity Drum Farm, 420 Coach Road, Argyle, NY 12809. Tel: (518) 638-8559, www.drumfarm.com.

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2006 DCI World Championship Results

The Cavaliers won their seventh DCI World Championship.

Over 21,000 fans attended the 2006 Drum Corps International World Championship held in Madison, Wisconsin this past August 12. After exciting semifinal and final competitions, **The Cavaliers** (from Rosemont, Illinois) earned their seventh DCI title. Their program, titled "Machine," featured original music by percussion arranger Jim Casella and brass arranger Richard Saucedo. In addition to winning caption awards in visual performance and overall general effect, the Cavies also received the Spirit Of Disney award for entertainment and imagination.

Phantom Regiment (from Rockford, Illinois) took second place with their "Faust" program, featuring music of Sergei Prokofiev and Gustav Mahler. And, for the first time in the corps' fifty-year history, their drumline (under the direction of Paul Rennick) won the Fred Sanford award for best percussion performance.

On August 9, Sponsors Of Musical Enrichment hosted the Individual & Ensemble competition. **Tim Jackson** of The Blue Devils won an unprecedented fourth consecutive title as best individual multi-tenor with his solo on three sets of toms (eighteen drums in all), while The Cavaliers' front ensemble won the best percussion ensemble award for the third year in a row. Other I&E winners are shown in the accompanying photos.

Tom Aungst, who has been with the

From left: The Blue Devils' Mike Bierek won the best individual snare drum category and Tim Jackson was named best individual multi-tenor. Frank Gonzalez from The Blue Knights won the best keyboard award, The Cavaliers' Bo Hoover won the multi-percussion medal, and The Boston Crusaders' Brian Radock (not shown) won best individual timpani.

CORPS	SCORE (out of 100)	DRUM SCORE (out of 10)
1. The Cavaliers	97.20	9.50 (4th)
2. Phantom Regiment	96.85	9.85 (1st)
3. Blue Devils	96.55	9.70 (2nd)
4. Bluecoats	93.175	9.625 (3rd)
5. The Cadets	93.075	9.325 (5th)
6. Santa Clara Vanguard	92.35	9.20 (7th)
7. Blue Knights	90.125	8.975 (9th)
8. Carolina Crown	89.975	8.375 (12th)
9. Madison Scouts	87.70	9.15 (8th)
10. Boston Crusaders	87.325	9.225 (6th)
11. Glassmen	86.00	8.65 (10th)
12. Spirit from JSU	84.825	8.625 (11th)

Phantom Regiment's drumline won the Fred Sanford award for best percussion performance.

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Cadets since 1981 as a marching member, instructor (and currently percussion caption head and arranger) was inducted into the DCI Hall Of Fame. "As a kid, I listened to Fred Sanford, Thom Hannum, Ralph Hardimon, and Tom Float," Aungst commented. "To be mentioned in the same sentence as these great Hall Of Famers is a great honor."

The 2007 World Championships will be held August 7–11, in Pasadena's Rose Bowl—the first time that the event will be held in California. For more information on joining or viewing drum & bugle corps, contact DCI at www.dci.org.

The Cavaliers' front ensemble won the best percussion ensemble for the third year in a row. Back row, from left: Kyle Voss, Rob Pastor, Alex Harmon, Adrian Castillo, and Tyler Stell. Front row, from left: Bo Hoover, Ali Bandeali, Jimmy McDonald, Jeremy Logan, and Oliver Rodriguez.

Story and photos by Lauren Vogel Weiss

From left: Oregon Crusaders' Mike Polson, Jon Supnick, Zach Batson, Mike Poste, and Andrew Doedens won the best bass drum ensemble award.

From left: Travis Vernon, David Medina, Brandon McVeigh, and Ian Smith of Santa Clara Vanguard won for best cymbal ensemble.

International Drumming Events

Thomas Lang

Meinl Drum Festival

The second annual **Meinl Drum Festival** took place at the company's factory in Gutenstetten, Germany this past September 9. Nearly 3,000 people came to enjoy factory tours, participate in drum circles and masterclasses, and see top Meinl artists perform.

This year's lineup started with **Thomas Lang**, followed by **Pete Wrba** & **Stephan Maas**, **Benny Greb**, **Rodney Holmes**, and **Felix Lehrmann** with his band Rivo Drei. The event ended with the announcement of September 8, 2007 as the official date of next year's Festival. More information is available at www.meinlcymbals.com.

Benny Greb

Rodney Holmes

Story and photos by Heinz Kronberger

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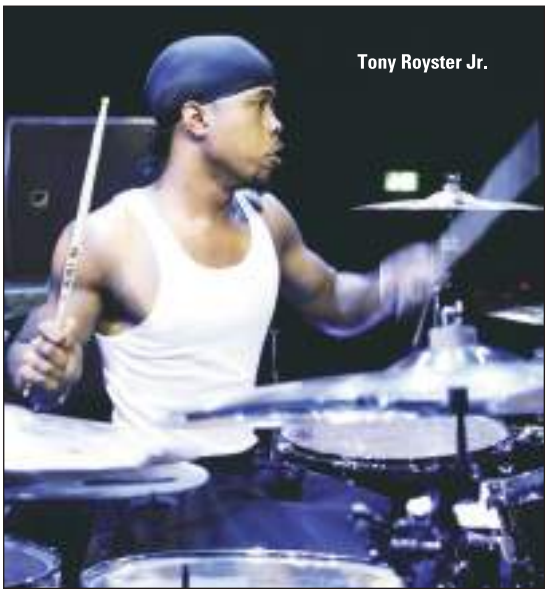
AGP Drum Event

On this past September 22, the Rockhal in Luxemburg was the site of the seventh annual **Al Ginter Percussion (AGP) Drum Event**. The show opened with Luxemburg's own **Misch Mootz**, whose combination of groove, technique, and style earned a rousing ovation. He was followed by groove drummer extraordinaire **Wolfgang Haffner**, who played to tracks from his last recording, *Shapes*. Then the Bulgarian percussion duo of **Stoyan Yankoulov** and **Elitsa Todorova** came up with some interesting rhythm and vocal combinations based on music from their country.

Bulgarian percussionist Elitsa Todorova

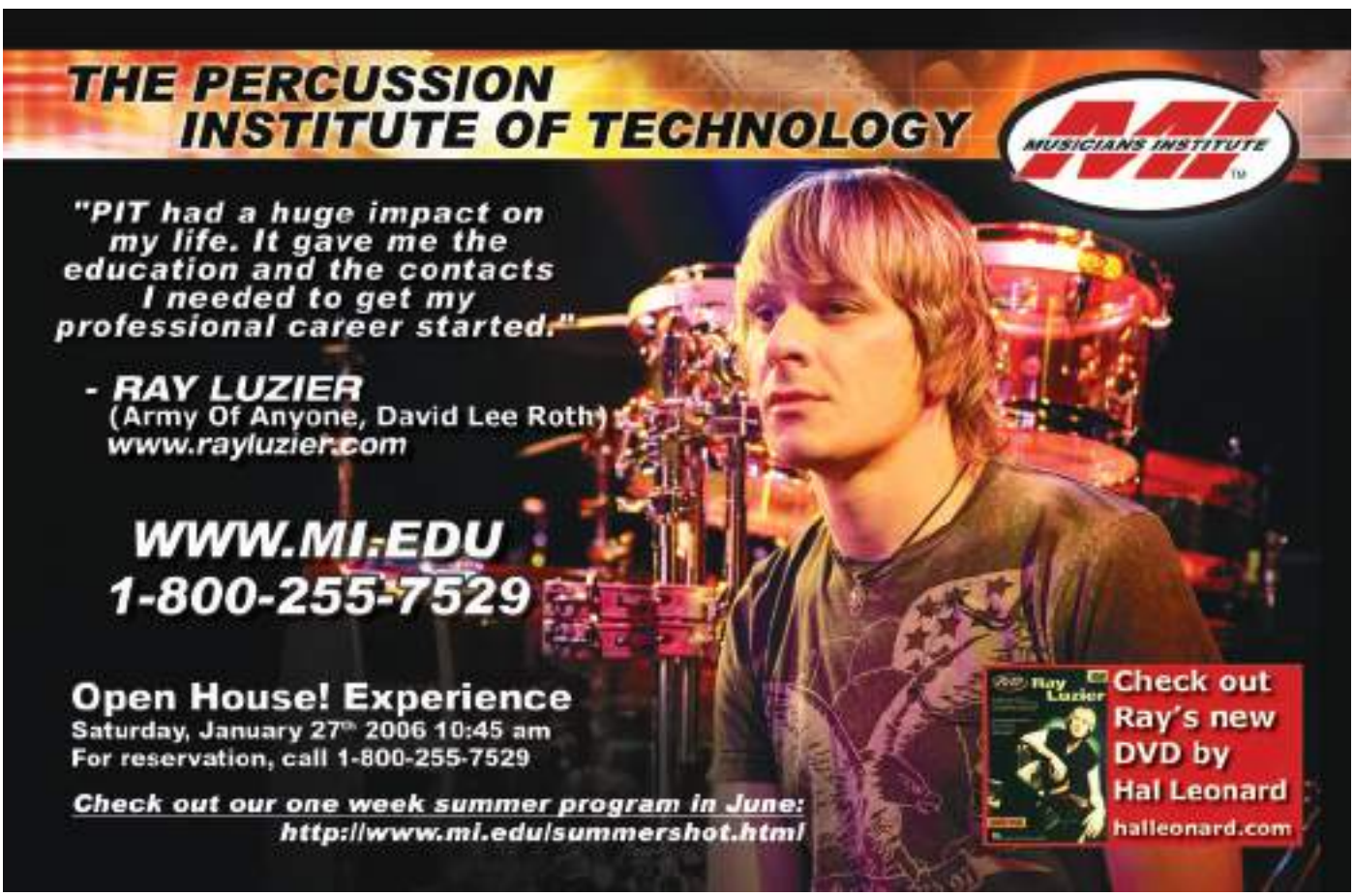


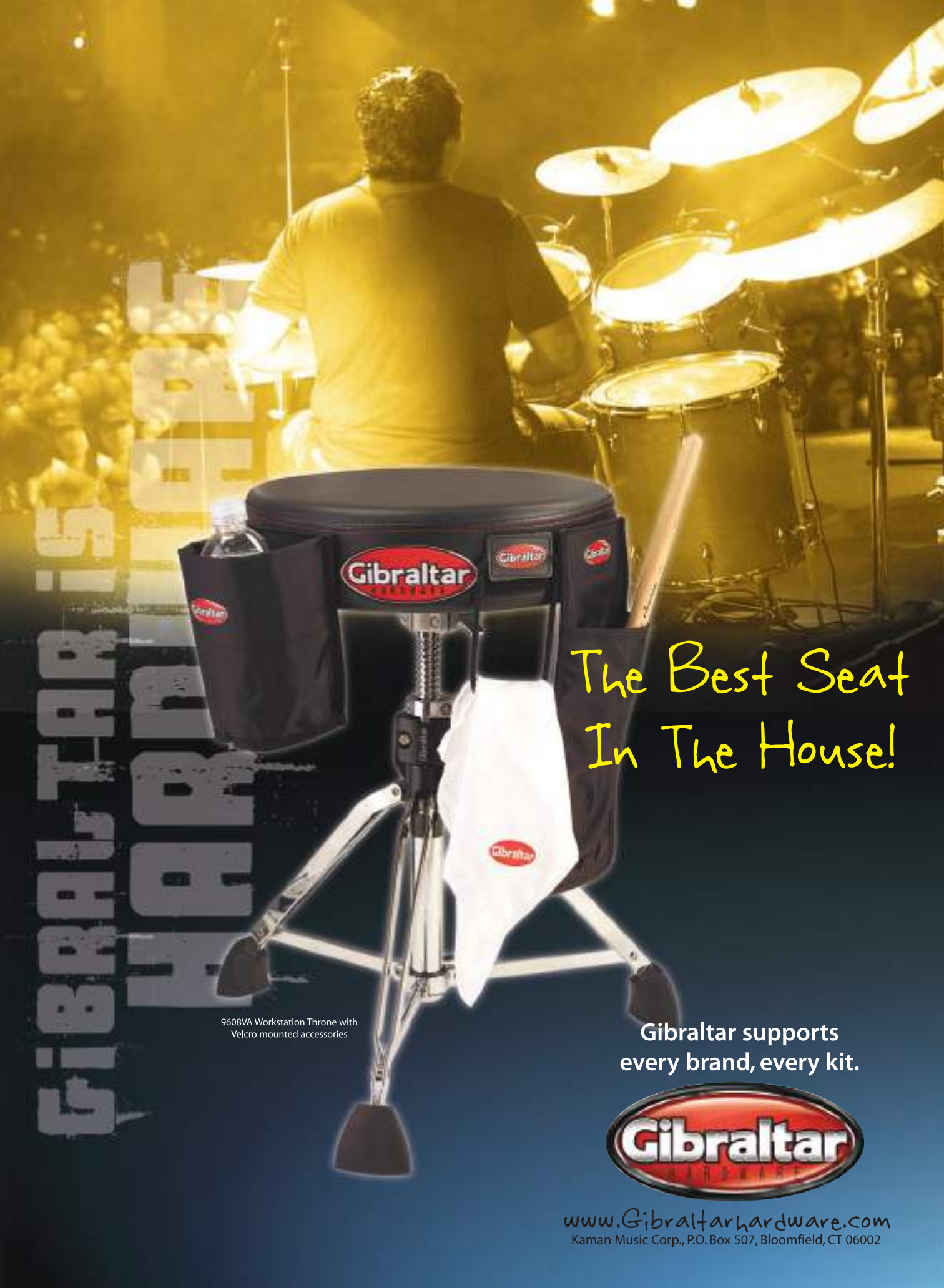
Tony Royster Jr.

The show's closer was **Tony Royster Jr.** The twenty-one-year-old drummer has all the chops and musicality needed to headline such an event.

The entire roster of artists jammed for the final five minutes of the show, before Al Ginter invited the audience back for next year's show, on September 22 and 23. More information is available at www.alginter.lu.

Story and photos by Heinz Kronberger

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Mendoza International Drum Festival

Paul Wertico

More than 2,600 drumming fans came from Argentina, Chile, Perú, and Uruguay to Godoy Cruz, Mendoza, Argentina this past July 28–30 for the **Mendoza International Drum Festival**. The event has become one of the largest and most renowned drum fests in South America.

Antonio Sanchez

Featured drummers and percussionists included **Jorge Araujo**, **Pablo Conalbi**, **Sergio Graziosi**, **Fernando Martinez**, **Ezequiel Piazza**, **Pablo Quiroga**, and **Carlos Riganti** (Argentina), **Daniel Luttick** (Australia), **Daniel Baeder** (Brazil), **Manuel Paez** (Chile), **Carmelo Urbano** (Cuba), and **Rick Latham**, **Antonio Sanchez**, and **Paul Wertico** (USA).

Rick Latham

The MIDF is directed by Argentine drum star Gustavo Meli. Sponsors included Bateristas al Sur, DW, Evans, IC Sticks, LP, Mapex, Paiste, Pearl, Premier, Pro-Mark, Remo, RMV Drums, Shure, Solidrums, Sonor, Stagg, Tosco, Yamaha, Zildjian, and *Modern Drummer*. More information is available at www.mendozadrumfest.com.

2006 Summer Rhythm Renewal

Elie Kihonia (left) and Jim Donovan at Summer Rhythm Renewal.

The 2006 Summer Rhythm Renewal was held this past August 3–6 at Saint Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania. The camp-like event focused on playing, learning, and experiencing the unifying effect of community drumming in a variety of ethnic styles. Drums were provided for everyone, and the students played along with the teachers.

The event is directed by **Jim Donovan**, who is a founding member of Rusted Root and also directs the St. Francis University World Drumming Ensemble. Instructors included Congolese master drummer **Elie Kihonia**, **Jim Dispirito** (former percussionist for Rusted Root and current percussion ensemble director at Eden Christian Academy), master percussionist **Daveed Korup** (founder of Drumfest! World Percussion education programs), master djembe drummer **Sogbety Dionamde** (from the Ivory Coast), Remo HealthRhythms facilitator **Maureen Jerant**, drum facilitator and children's music specialist **Mike Deaton**, and digeridoo authority **Jim Gagnon**.

Sogbety Dionamde (front) performed with Jim Donovan at the closing concert.

More information is available at www.rhythmrenewal.com.

Kevin D. Osborne

For more photos from the events covered here, as well as additional news from the world of drumming, go to www.moderndrummer.com and click on "News/Events."

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Process Of Evolution

We normally don't include photos of drummers in *Kit Of The Month*. However, including young Tyler Hudson of Wilmington, Massachusetts in these shots was the best way to illustrate the evolution of his drumkit and the creative thinking involved.

The first shot depicts Tyler at four years old, showing an interest in drumming on his Percussion Plus beginner kit. By his fifth birthday, Tyler had grown beyond that kit—at least musically. He particularly wanted a deeper, fuller-sounding bass drum and toms. His parents surprised him with a full-sized used Ludwig kit. Baffled by how to bring the toms down to a reachable level for Tyler while still letting him play the kick pedal, they began a search for a smaller yet still good-sounding bass drum.

A salesman at a local drum shop suggested using a double pedal to reach the existing bass drum from where Tyler sat to play the rest of the kit. Since the kit had come with a Pearl drum rack, it was easy to create the unusual setup. Tyler tried it, and it worked like a charm. He played the kit this way until he grew enough to play it conventionally.

Tyler's process of evolution has continued since then. Today, at the ripe old age of eleven, he plays a double bass Pearl Session kit.

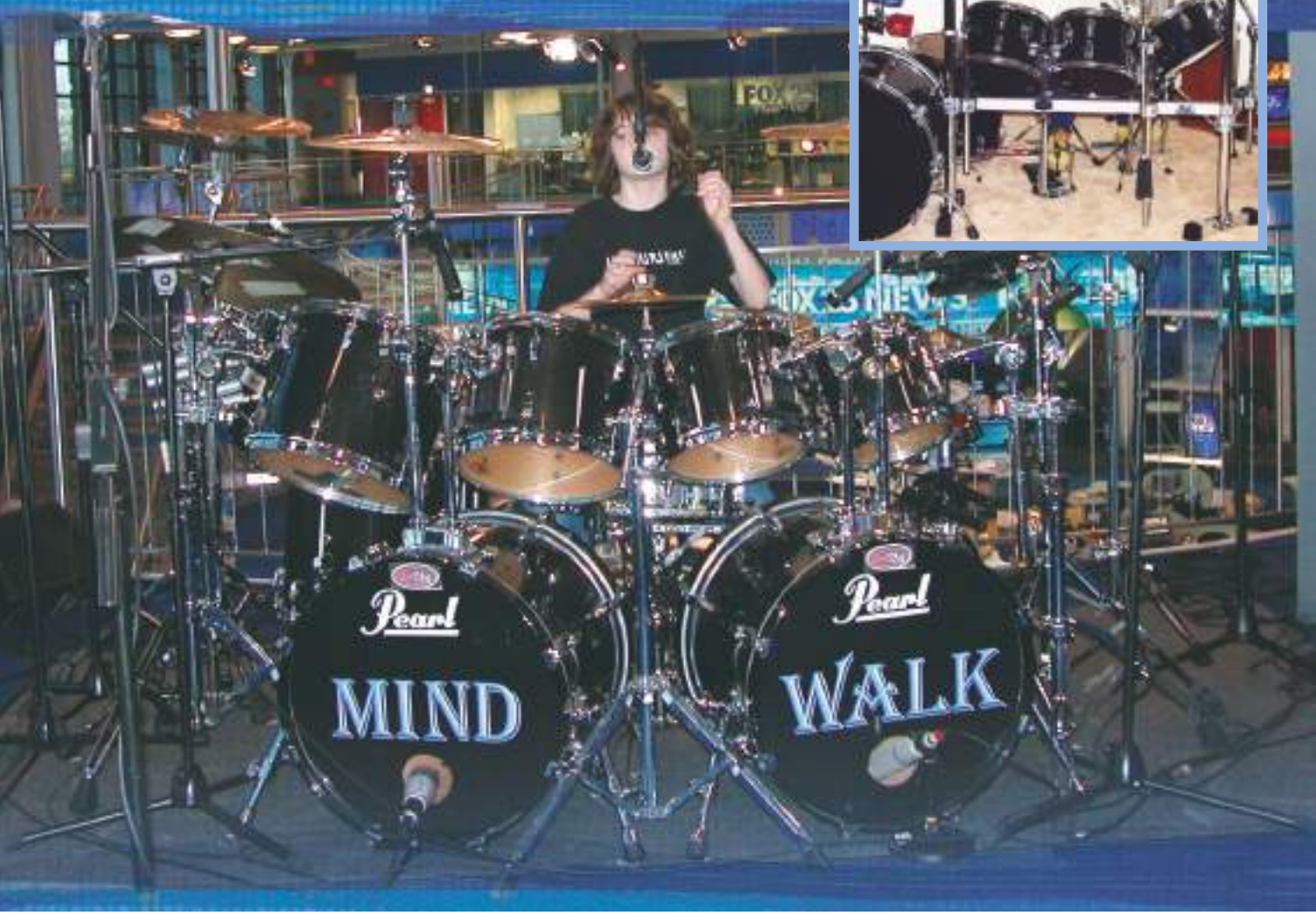
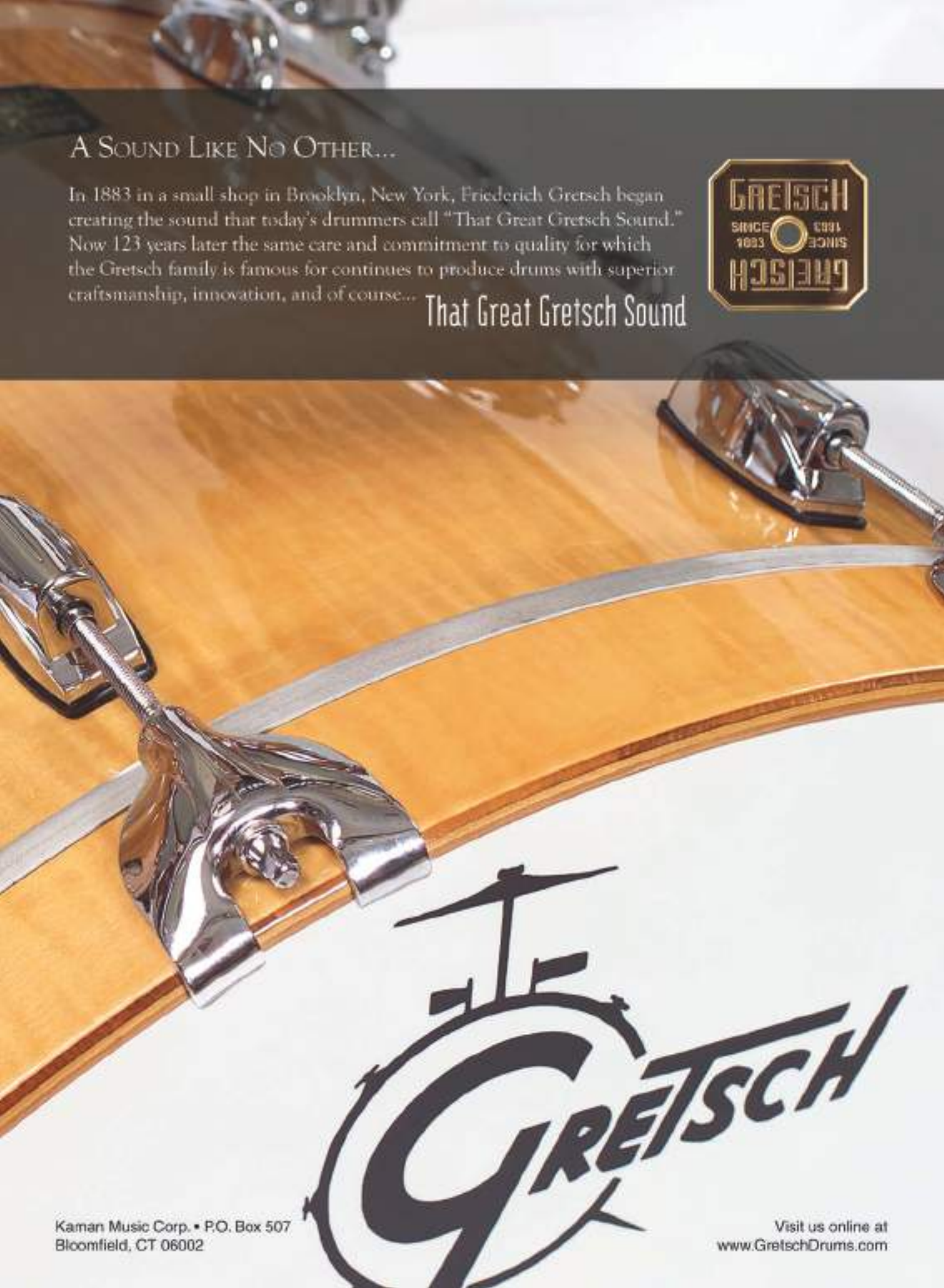


PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

1. Photos must be high-quality and in color. 35mm slides or high-resolution (300 dpi) digital photos are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted. 2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Only show drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. 5. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit.

Send photo(s) to: Kit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned.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